



Salford
Safeguarding
Children Partnership



Education Listening Hub Consultation with Schools Final Report

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Introduction

Roles and Responsibilities

Salford has recently developed a [Listening Hub](#). I was commissioned by the Salford Safeguarding Children Partnership (SSCP) to take a lead role in delivering a short-term project with a specific aim of working directly with Headteachers and Safeguarding Leads in local schools. The consultation, part of the [Education Listening Hub](#), provided the SSCP with an opportunity to:

“.. increase engagement with schools and capitalise upon the knowledge and experience of those responsible for safeguarding within educational establishment “

Extract from funding bid to DfE

The consultation also enabled SSCP to raise awareness of the Listening Hub and to encourage schools to be involved in the development of the Hub by taking part in interviews.

As Independent Consultant for the Salford Safeguarding Children Partnership (SSCP), I bring my own unique perspective to this project. First and foremost, I am a Safeguarding practitioner. I understand the importance of governance the need for policies, procedures and clear pathways. I am also an Addiction & Recovery Specialist, who is passionate about community engagement, a person-centred approach in all I do and the importance of relationship building.

A blog I wrote several years ago : ["6 Reasons why Community are our Greatest Asset when it comes to Safeguarding"](#) draws on my professional background and the values which inform my practice. I have worked for almost 30 years in both front-line practitioner roles, supporting Young People, Adults and their families in relation to substance use, and as Project Lead for Community Engagement, supporting individuals and groups to make positive changes to their own lives and the communities to which they belong.

Consequently, I understand the complexities of combining effective safeguarding with a person-centred approach and I have a keen eye for when this is going well in services and when practitioners need support to balance the two effectively.

The Strategic Project Team

The work of the Education Listening Hub was led by members of the SSCP, including Headteacher of Boothstown Primary as Education Lead for the project. From Sept 2021 the Business Manager for SSCP joined the project team

Administration and business support was provided throughout the project by Children's Services. A Senior Communication Officer from Salford City Council provided comms & Tech support

Throughout the project I have worked alongside, the SSCP Participation Lead for the Listening Hub, who participated in the design and delivery of the questionnaires and in consulting with partners.

Colleagues from the Early Help Team assisted greatly in the designing of the questionnaire and the early stages of the project. During the consultation we benefitted from further support from Early Help School Coordinators, who assisted in the delivery of interviews with schools.

Background to the Education Listening Hub

Salford has implemented a [Listening Hub](#) - a truly innovative model developed by the SSCP which will ensure that Salford is listening and responding to the voices and wishes of the community.

The Listening Hub builds on the work of the [Making a Difference project](#), [Salford Standards for Listening](#) and the use of [Listening Loops](#) to ensure a strong culture of participation is central to delivery.

These recent developments and ongoing plans for the Listening Hub are collectively putting Salford “on the map” as a place where the **voice of the community** is at the heart of service development.

“... listening and responding to the voice and experience of schools, using this to inform safeguarding priorities, neighbourhood place-based working and horizon scanning.”

“Increase and sustain participation with children, young people, families and communities, connecting networks of voice”

As the Listening Hub develops it aims to make good use of existing forums within SSCP, such as the Education Subgroup and existing thematic forums based around current Safeguarding priorities (e.g., Neglect, Sexual Abuse, Contextual Safeguarding and Children Missing)

The Listening Hub encourages a participative multi-agency approach which recognises the key role that the Partnership plays in effective engagement with Children, Young People and Families.

- To embed and develop shared standards for listening
- To develop shared resources that work for children and families
- To co-ordinate engagement/participation across Salford
- Identify themes that can be considered with strategic and operational plans and practice

The SSCP recognises the importance of schools in this process and secured funding for a 1-year project to work specifically with schools – the Education Listening Hub.

As an Independent Consultant for the project, I was tasked with consulting directly with schools to inform the ongoing work of the SSCP and the direction of the Listening Hub.

Initial aim of the Project:

The Education Listening Hub will “dovetail” into the overall model for the Listening Hub by to create a new model of working that capitalises on the wealth of experience of education professionals and strengthens their engagement with the partnership

The Interview Design and Delivery

Initial consultation involved online interviews conducted by members of the Education Listening Hub project with a representative, the Head Teacher or Safeguarding Lead, from each school

A Questionnaire was designed with 4 specific parts:

1. Exploring the strengths and challenges relating to Early Help & Safeguarding,
2. Partnership working – how schools engage with other agencies and communities
3. Gathering the Views of the Children Young People and Families – listening to and responding
4. Next steps – how schools would like to engage with the Listening Hub and what outcomes they hope to see.

An online booking system was set up and the Education Lead for the project promoted the opportunity with Heads of School inviting them or their Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) to attend a consultation and inform the process.

The interviews were initially carried out by myself as Independent Consultant for the Project and the SSCP Participation Lead. We also welcomed the additional support from Early Help school Coordinators who assisted in the interviews during July & September 2021

May to July:

- Questionnaire designed
- Online booking system created
- Schools invited to take part
- 28 interviews completed – 24 primary and 4 secondary

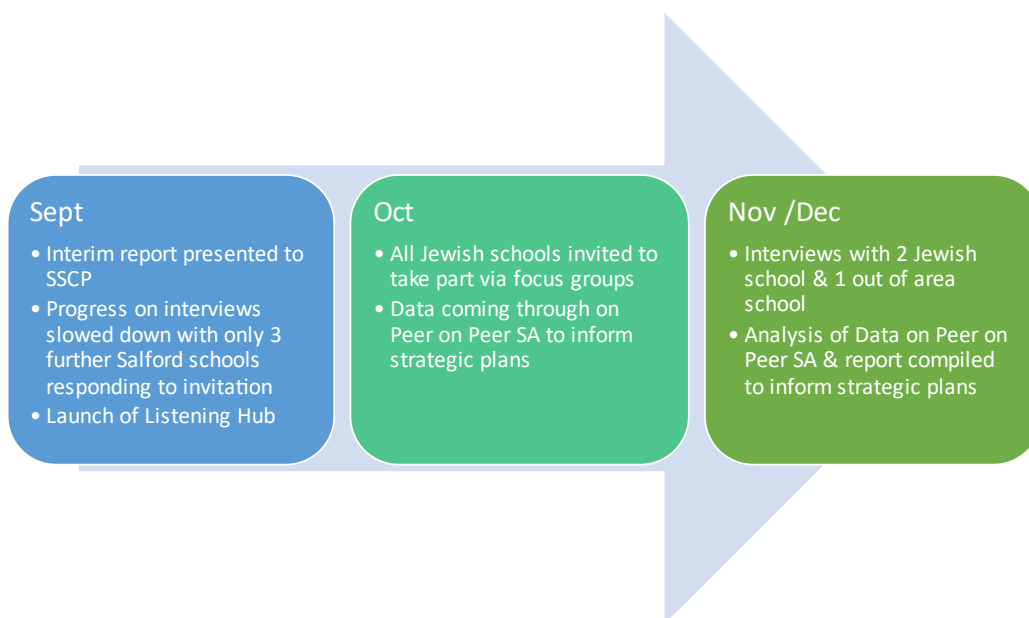
July to September:

- Collating data to identify emerging themes
- Creation of Listening Loops on specific thematic areas
- Interim report for SSCP

The interviews proved to be more time consuming than we had anticipated – taking up to 2 hours in interview time, with additional time needed to explore the data for themes and areas of significance.

This investment of time from schools and the SSCP has provided a rich source of data to inform both the development of the Listening Hub and on-going plans for the SSCP in terms of **“Listening to and responding to the voice of schools.”**

Regular review meetings between myself as Education Listening Hub Consultant and the SSCP Participation Lead led to some adjustments to the original questionnaire. A question which asked schools to “rate their level” of engagement was removed as we realised a focus on “how schools engaged and what was effective” was far more useful. Consideration of the recent Ofsted report led to questions on incidences of peer-on-peer sexual abuse. Similarly, our original set of questions did not enable schools to reflect fully on diversity and the ways in which the school approach this issue. A more focused question highlighted the variety of experiences and responses to diversity across the city.



We invited all local Jewish schools to attend focus groups, offering both face to face and online opportunities.

Although places on the focus groups were not filled, we did get the opportunity to interview 2 Jewish schools directly, providing useful insight to feed into the consultation.

Reflecting on the limited number of Jewish schools who took part, it became clear that the short timescale and the limited resource of working just 1- or 2-days week on the project, left little room for suitable dates. This this led to the focus groups unknowingly being scheduled during Jewish half term school holiday and Hanukkah.

Similarly, out of area schools have been contacted, but up to now only 1 has been able to commit to taking part. Nevertheless, this one interview, has provided an alternative

perspective which can inform the direction of any further consultation the SSCP wishes to take.

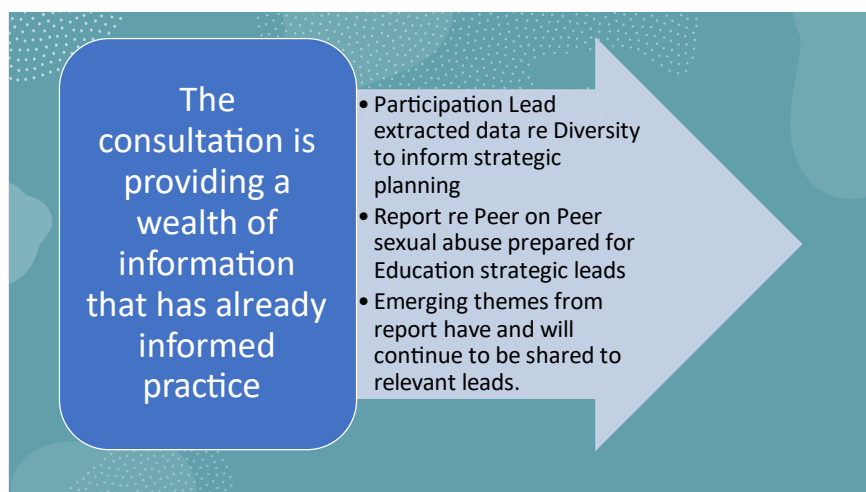


From the end of June up until the beginning of December, we successfully completed 34 interviews with schools. This including 1 out of area school 2 Jewish schools, 2 schools providing specialist provision and 1 Pupil Referral Unit (PRU).

The types of schools interviewed is fairly representative of all schools in Salford, covering primary schools, high schools, faith schools, and schools providing specialist provision. In the time frame we had it was only possible to engage with 6 secondary schools, 1 of which was out of the area. Further consultation with high schools may identify additional themes for the SSCP to explore

Breakdown of schools interviewed by age of pupil

Age of pupils	% of all schools interviewed
Primary	85%
Secondary	9%
Aged 4 -11	6%



Whilst we appreciate these initial interviews are a snapshot of the wider picture for schools, we are already seeing specific themes emerging. The Participation Lead has begun to share some of these themes with partners, using the Listening Loop template to demonstrate learning and action taken.

Considerations before looking at the findings

The consultation draws out some interesting themes and challenges but also provides Salford with much to celebrate in the work of schools. In preparation for looking at the findings of your schools, there are 3 specific areas which are important to acknowledge

1. The 6 Principles of Safeguarding

As we know, the practice of safeguarding begins long before a referral is made and continues way beyond any action taken following referral. Even if the parents – for whatever reason – choose not to engage with the process, those agencies who have a strong safeguarding culture continue to monitor, reflect and review; ensuring, as best they can, that the dialogue between the professional and the family remains open and positive.

Empowerment: People being supported and encouraged to make their own decisions with informed consent

Prevention: It is better to take action before harm occurs.

Partnership: Local solutions through services working with their communities. Communities have a part to play in preventing, detecting and reporting safeguarding issues.

Proportionality: The least intrusive response appropriate to the risk presented

Protection: Support and representation for those in greatest need

Accountability: Accountability and transparency in safeguarding practice.

Salford recognises the importance of the 6 Principles when considering partnership arrangement for safeguarding. In line with the Care Act 2014, Salford's Safeguarding Adults Board, places the 6 principles central to arrangements and local guidance: [The role of the Safeguarding Adults Board](#)

In 2019, the 6 Principles were adopted as part of the SSCP review of [Safeguarding arrangements](#) and, as reflected in the latest [SSCP Annual Report \(2020/2021\)](#) the 6 principles remain essential in guiding the work of the partnership

In my experience, embedding these principles into the hearts and minds of practitioners, really helps them to understand how their intervention, however small, plays a huge part in the overall safeguarding of children and young people.

Throughout the consultation there are some excellent examples of schools delivering the 6 principles of safeguarding. Ensuring the whole of the children's workforce is familiar with these principles will help to maintain a strong culture of safeguarding and enable a focus on the excellent work which takes place within schools, despite the many challenges and constraints.

2. The emergence of COVID

The COVID restrictions of the last 2 years led to many businesses being closed and sadly some services having to either shut their doors or provide a reduced level of support sometimes online or via telephone. Essential services continued doing what they could with limited opportunity to provide face to face contact with young people and their families.

We saw some wonderful examples across the children's workforce, both statutory services and the VCSE sector, of teams finding "a way" to offer at least some kind of support to the communities they serve.

For schools, it was pretty much "**business as usual**" in terms of what they were expected to deliver. With lessons online and limited contact with all pupils, schools had to adapt quickly – and they did! The consultation highlights how **Salford schools went one step further** – often going above and beyond to ensure that, not only were they delivering the requirements of remote learning provision but that the welfare of their families was a high priority too.

Recent Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews, formerly known as Serious Case Reviews, provide harrowing accounts of child deaths and serious injuries, where the isolation of families with the lack of contact with services, will no doubt emerge as a significant factor. In one such case the Government has launched a [National Review](#) following the tragic murder of Arthur Labino-Hughes. As reported in an article by [Community Care](#) the Association of Child Protection Professionals (AoCPP) has already highlighted the impact of lockdown as a potential risk factor. Furthermore, the [Department for Education](#) reports that the number of child deaths and cases of serious harm reported by councils rose by a fifth compared to the previous year, following the onset of COVID in 2020.

We know that the learning of many previous case reviews has highlighted that the closure of, or poor attendance at schools, nurseries and playgroups denies a child an element of protection. Many Salford schools strived to maintain contact with families during school closures by encouraging and monitoring engagement in remote lessons, conducting welfare checks and calling at the home to see if support was required or delivering food parcels etc.

You will see some examples of how schools took a protective, preventative approach; perhaps not always considering how much this contributed to the safeguarding of pupils. Schools simply did what they felt was necessary to ensure they had opportunities to keep regular contact.

As we did not get to speak to all Salford Schools, I am certain there will be many more examples of good practice in this regard. Salford may wish to consider a more detailed review of schools' approach to COVID, to draw out the innovative ways schools adapted and the impact this had on the safety and wellbeing of children

3. The Consultation benefitted schools hugely

An unexpected outcome from the consultation was the extent of positive feedback from headteachers and safeguarding leads. The format of the interviews was structured with set questions, most of which were open-ended. This allowed schools to open up and share their unique perspective. Many of the teachers and safeguarding leads were able to reflect on their practice and consider the many ways they support the pupils and families

"I have been able to talk. Really important. I've never heard of an Authority doing this before and schools getting their issues across"

"This (interview) has given me a fantastic opportunity to reflect on the work that the school is doing. We are so busy "just getting on with it" that we don't have the chance to reflect. This can lead to fleeting feeling of – are we doing everything we can? Should we be doing more...or doing it differently?"

Emerging Themes

Part One: Safeguarding & Early Help

The initial consultation interviews provide a wonderful insight into each school’s experiences and this feedback has the potential to inform practice development and service delivery way beyond the 1-year scope of the Education Listening Hub project.

Safeguarding and Early Help what's going well?

Early Help Coordinator role	Partnerships	Ethos of the School	Relationship with Families
<p>Increased positive outcomes for families</p> <p>Enhances the Family Officer role</p> <p>Provides great updates and information</p>	<p>OE provides insight for schools and increases positive outcomes</p> <p>Existing networks, school clusters – help to link with other schools</p> <p>The Bridge – not just referrals but advice and information</p>	<p>Relationship between staff and children is key in identifying safeguarding as soon as possible”</p> <p>Staff have time and are approachable</p> <p>We have an open-door policy</p>	<p>Parents also attended the school - we know the parents and the children. - we can have an honest dialogue with parents”</p> <p>Our school is a community hub parents talk to us about any issues /concerns</p>

What has become clear throughout is how **relationship building is crucial** to effective working, whether that be relationships schools have with partner agencies or the relationship schools develop with their pupils and parents.

Where positive relationships are already established there is willingness to work together that is based on trust and transparency.

Schools have provided many examples of what is working well for them, but we also encouraged them to share any difficulties they were facing. It is worth noting that whilst there are a lot of commonalities between schools and their approach to safeguarding and Early Help, there are also many differences in terms of the number of children at Child Protection/Child in Need /Early Help a school may be working with.

We are beginning to see some of the challenges faced by schools due to many issues such as:

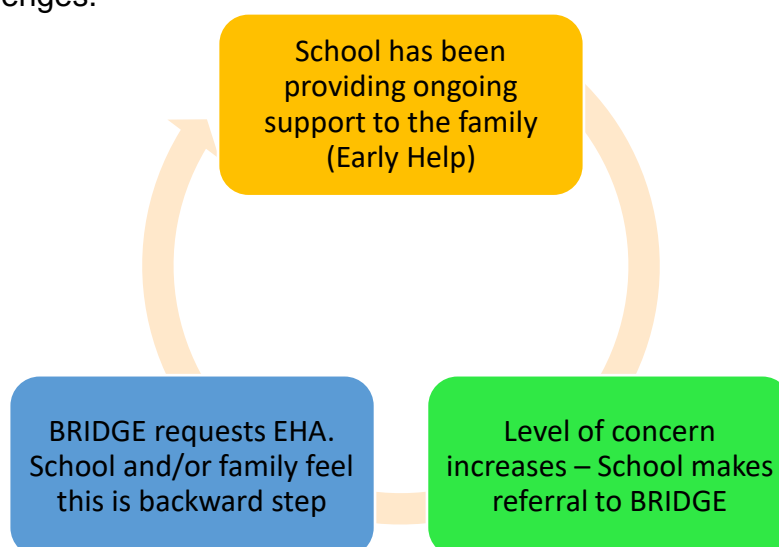
- **limited capacity of external agencies,**
- existing processes that perhaps **do not fully meet the needs identified,**

- **lack of knowledge of “what’s available”** and
- how to support families when they are not ready to engage.

Safeguarding & Early Help- what are some of the challenges?

Threshold & Referral	Social Work Teams	Support for Children & Families	Early Help
<p>Difficult to provide enough evidence to meet threshold (particularly neglect)</p> <p>Parents not engaging at CIN/TAF level, what can be done?</p>	<p>“we see some improvement then SW involvement stops, and they (families) come back around again”</p> <p>Turnover of staff /many different SW impacts on families</p>	<p>Early Year’s Assessments not completed during pre-school</p> <p>Schools not sure how to respond when families are reluctant to engage in EH process/ CIN and TAF</p> <p>Access to CAMHS and SEN can be difficult</p>	<p>EH form – very long and time consuming (even though we know our families very well)</p> <p>Being asked to undertake EHA but not understanding “why”</p> <p>EH Coordinator role really helps but they don’t always see the school’s position</p>

Despite these very real issues, many schools go **“above and beyond”** to ensure that whatever challenges are faced, children and families are supported in the best way possible. Further exploration of the feedback will uncover the solutions that schools find to overcome these challenges.



Many of the we spoke to have relationships with the pupils and their families, they have developed strong trusting relationships, and consider their assessments to be valuable. When referral to the Bridge does not result in the desired outcome, schools and families can feel they are not being

schools excellent

listened. It's clear that Salford values the partnership approach to safeguarding and is constantly looking at ways this can be strengthened to ensure positive outcomes so this issue in particular is should be addressed.

The [challenge and escalation policy](#) provides a clear pathway for practitioners to overcome situations where there may be differing views on how best to support children young people and families. The policy has been in place for some time, and schools did make reference to the process. However, as this was an issue for several schools there may be benefit in ensuring the workforce is aware of the procedure and when to use it.

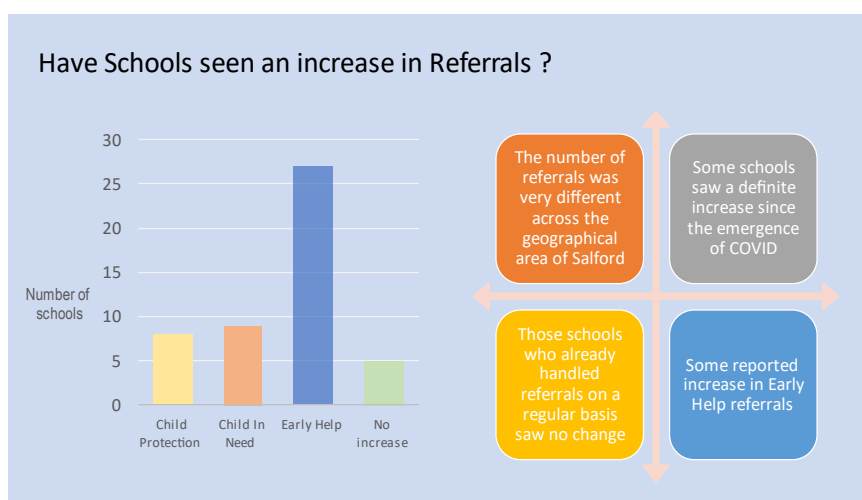
What else might help to overcome this issue?

- Clarity of roles for school staff, Early Help team and the wider SSCP
- Recognition of the intensive family work being provided by some of the schools
- Clear guidance so that Early Help Assessment is seen as a “next step” not a repetition of what has been done

How might this be achieved?

- Review the Education Listening Hub consultation data further to explore the prevalence of this issue
- Identify those schools who provide intensive family support
- Listening Loops for schools to highlight good practice
- Provide space for schools to share concerns and enable 2-way conversation to overcome such challenges – via Listening Hub
- Listening Hub / Learning events to raise awareness of partnership working and effective referral processes

The number of referrals handled by each school varies significantly. Despite this most schools reported they had seen an increase in referrals over the last 2 years mainly for Early Help.



We asked schools why they felt there had been an increase in referrals and it is clear to see how much the COVID pandemic had impacted on many families. The social isolation,

financial worries impact on mental health of children and adults had, according to many schools, contributed to this increase in referrals

Why do you think there has been an increase in referrals?



However, schools felt that the family circumstances were not the only significant factor in the increase in referrals.

Schools also recognised that the various systems which they had swiftly put in place to ensure continued contact with families during the COVID restrictions had resulted in concerns being highlighted – sometimes with families who had not previously been recognised as needing support.

During COVID restrictions, many schools adopted new initiatives to ensure they “stayed in touch” with families despite the lack of face-to-face contact. Welfare calls were made to home and if contact was not made some schools carried out home visits to ensure that families were receiving the support they needed.

Examples of new systems of working, introduced during COVID:

- Schools regularly contacted families during home schooling. Home visits during COVID identified more issues for families
- The new ways of working during COVID resulted in parents being more open with schools
- Some schools increased contact with families whose children or young people were subject to CIN or CP. They telephone to ask if they were OK and to see if the school could support them in anyway
- One school talked about taking time to explain Early Help to parents. This led to parents being more willing to engage.

Additional findings from Part One of the Questionnaire:

When designing the questionnaire for the school consultation, current city-wide priorities informed the content and shaped the initial design of the consultation. The timing of the consultation coincided with publication of the Ofsted report [Review of Sexual Abuse in Schools and Colleges](#) and the survey provided an excellent opportunity to consult schools on this important issue.

We included a question in the consultation specifically relating to Peer-on-Peer abuse which would provide some evidence of the prevalence of the issue for our schools and feedback from Heads and Safeguarding leads to inform strategic planning for Salford.

A detailed analysis on the findings from all the interviews in relation to Peer-on-Peer abuse has already been conducted with a separate report produced, which has been presented at relevant practice meeting to inform the work of Strategic Leads within Salford. A brief summary is shown here, however, any enquiries regarding the more detailed findings would need to be discussed with Education leads via the SSCP.

- *33% of schools report incidence of peer-on-peer sexual abuse*
- *86% of schools were confident that ALL staff would feel confident in responding to disclosure*
- *Though not prevalent in all schools – they understand the importance of tackling peer-on-peer sexual abuse and are already doing so through protection, prevention and empowerment*
- *However, schools want clarity with regard to referral processes, services available to support YP and also clear guidance on how the age of the child (both victim and perpetrator) impacts on the assessment.*

What has become apparent when analysing and exploring the data from the school’s consultation, is how rich and valuable the feedback has been. Whilst the findings here give a flavour of what has been drawn out from the interviews in respect of Early Help and Safeguarding, further analysis of the data – perhaps from an alternative perspective to my own, or with knowledge of additional factors, impact on the workforce or safeguarding issues may highlight additional themes.

What else did we learn and how can this inform practice?

Learning	Informing Practice
Some schools have dedicated staff responsible for safeguarding and/or pastoral care. For other schools teaching staff take on this role	A further review of the data could explore the opportunities and challenges the different models provide
During COVID schools responded to need. There are many examples of innovation, good practice and resilience within Salford	Encourage schools to use the Listening Loops, to document their successes and share with others.

Part Two: Partnership working – how schools engage with other agencies and communities

In designing the questionnaire, the team had anticipated that whilst partnership work was an intrinsic part of the processes within schools, arrangements for joint working may be

different across the city. We wanted schools to share with us what was going well and any challenges they may be facing.

When asking schools about their engagement with external agencies and the wider community, the response was extremely varied. Interviewers often had to prompt the discussion or give clarity about the type of agencies we might want them to consider.

Some schools were quick to mention those agencies who they already had good relationships with and how this partnership work provided effective outcomes for pupils.

Schools are linked with a range of partner agencies:

Type of intervention	Partner Agency
Family work	Cornerstone, Life Centre, Humankind, SAFE families
Emotional Wellbeing	42nd street Therapeutic counsellor – reduces MH, CARITAS
Youth Projects	Foundation 92 provided workshops with the children to explore Mental Health Manchester Citizens – environment work , Forest School Childrens University – children learning from trips outside of school Sheffield University – mental wellbeing . not yet completed but already seen and improvement for children Youth Service to speak to older children Worsley Round table (fundraising)

Partnership work with external agencies comes in many forms. Sometimes the joint working relationships are well established and so intrinsic to the work of the school, that they are no longer considered “external agencies.”

Schools approach outside organisations for a variety of reasons, complimenting and strengthening their work with both pupils and their families.

For some schools, the consultation prompted them to reflect on previous relationships with external agencies and to consider how they could build on those past successes.

Community organisations which serve specific needs in local neighbourhoods are often utilised by schools. This could be a joint working relationship whereby a local group is based within a school or simply signposting parents to agencies for specific needs, such as food banks, credit unions or counselling.

With the variety of responses, it became apparent that whilst schools are very aware of the organisations which are well established in Salford, such as Humankind, 42nd Street, Salford Youth Service, knowledge of what is available within localities is not always well known.

Furthermore, schools were not always aware of how they could find out about local Voluntary Sector organisations serving their communities. [Salford CVS](#) is the local infrastructure organisation for Voluntary Community and Social Enterprises. Staff are available to link schools with VCSE groups and their [online directory](#) can help schools to connect with neighbourhood provision. Salford CVS have also provided [small grants](#) to be used by schools to improve health and wellbeing.

Many schools were aware of CVS in relation to the grants program, but some had not linked with CVS before or tapped into the wealth of information the organisation provides on the VCSE sector here in Salford.

Where there were links with external agencies it was clear to see the positive benefits.

Schools comment on the work of external partners

“Really positive – (this work) provides additional evidence for supporting families.”
Humankind

“The sessions reduce mental health issues”
Therapeutic Counsellor

“It works really well; makes them (the children) feel listened to. Year 6 are treated like adults. They don’t want to be treated like children – (youth worker input) gives them an idea of what adulthood is like. They can give their ideas back to Youth Service and makes them feel more grown up”
Salford Youth Service

“The children feel proud. It builds confidence”
The Forest School.

As mentioned throughout this report, the emergence of COVID: the restrictions, the temporary closure of some services and the impact of the pandemic on the emotional wellbeing of communities, led to some schools forging new partnership links.

Although schools recognised that there was a reduction in provision as services were forced to temporarily close during lockdown, several schools introduced new ways of working to ensure the welfare of their pupils and the needs of the wider families were considered.

Schools frequently went **“above and beyond,”** using innovative approaches to ensure that the curriculum was delivered AND families received the support they needed at this difficult time.

Salford schools were finding new ways of working which meant they often had more contact with families and were able to recognise when families required that additional support.

Like many communities across the UK, gaps created by lack of face-to-face delivery were often filled quickly by local communities coming together single-handedly or in partnership with statutory services to provide essential services such as online support, meal provision, volunteer befriending and helplines.

New links were made as the schools connected families with essential services such as local food banks.

Whilst schools recognised the importance of partnership working long before the COVID restrictions, there was an acknowledgement that more links with partners and communities would be of huge benefit for schools. Partnership working enables specialist provision and tailored approaches based on local need. However, schools recognised this work was not without its own challenges.

Challenges to Partnership working:

- Funding – keeping projects going - Writing bids is time consuming
- COVID – changes in provision and we don't know “what's out there”
- Not having someone in the school with a specific role to “find out what's out there!”
- Children accessing support in school time – other children notice them leaving the classroom. Also staying in class can be good for MH too
- limited capacity of external agencies,
- existing processes that perhaps don't fully meet the needs identified,
- how to support families when they are not ready to engage.

Schools in Salford are committed to making a positive difference for the communities they serve. Whilst individually they may currently be working in different ways with various levels of success, it is clear from the consultation that schools want to embrace more partnership working. Schools are keen to link with external agencies to ensure the best outcomes for pupils, their families and the school.

It may be that some schools are not yet aware of [The Salford Thrive Directory](#) which provides a much needed resource for schools and all partner agencies in Salford

The Salford Thrive Directory has been developed to support anyone working or volunteering with children and young people. The directory will help you access useful information about different types of resources and services that are available to support children and young people's social, emotional health and well-being and to provide guidance when making a referral into services.

Plans going forward should look at other ways to support schools to enhance opportunities for partnership working. An Education Listening Hub for schools could enhance partnerships in the community in several ways. For example:

- Identifying need as it arises
- Use of Listening Loops to highlight positive outcomes
- Schools working together in clusters to look at need and identify appropriate partner agencies to meet need across several schools
- To keep schools up to date with new projects
- Link closely with Salford CVS to
- keep up to date with funding opportunities

- Find out about existing support from the VCSE sector
- Learn about new projects being developed
- Share information about specific needs and match up with VCSE sector provision

In considering the opportunities for strengthening partnership work it is worth noting other models adopted in Salford such as [Team Around the School](#), part of the Education Inclusion strategy, which encourage agencies to come together to provide the best outcomes for children young people and families.

*“In recognition of the need to strengthen partnership working and capitalise on the support available to school, Salford we seen real engagement from education colleagues in support of the “Team Around the School design, and investment form the City Council
Karen Armfield Headteacher & Education Lead for this project*

What does the Team Around the School seek to achieve?

The key areas to focus on for the work were:

- taking the lead on reviewing the current model within the Early Help Service, in consultation with schools, staff within the Early Help Service, other Children’s Services and wider stakeholders.
- Alignment of the model with other key strategies and delivery models, such as the Inclusion Strategy, Emotional Health and Wellbeing in Schools, and Neurodevelopment Pathway.
- The work will include a full review of the existing offers to schools, how schools access the support, and the effectiveness of the support offered.
- This review will be undertaken in consultation with schools and relevant partners, to develop a codesigned model of support for schools.
Develop and present a codified ‘Team Around a School’ model that can be shared with schools and partners to clearly articulate the offer available. This model will be the basis for a cost benefit analysis on both the ‘Team Around a School’ model and the Schools Coordinators role within it.

Part Three: Gathering the Views of the Children, Young People and Families

Throughout the consultation there is clear evidence of the commitment and dedication within schools to ensure positive outcomes for pupils and their families, and this section of the consultation was, without a doubt, where we saw many examples of good practice.

Discussions focused on how schools engaged with pupils and their families and the complex issues they identified, including the difficulties faced by children and young people, which may not have been known had the schools not developed such effective processes.

Engaging with Children & Young People

Talking about emotions, helping children to understand and express their feelings enables schools to respond appropriately. This might be additional support within school for a particular child, a conversation with the child's parent(s) to work together with the whole family or, if required, a referral to the Bridge or a specialist service. Alternatively, the school may listen to children and consider introducing a new approach for the school, such as Wellbeing Assemblies to benefit all children.

There are many ways in which schools ensure consistent engagement with pupils, and whilst the consultation drew out some great examples, it should be noted that further exploration and encouraging schools to share case studies examples of good practice will no doubt uncover even more.

Examples of how Salford Schools engage with Children & Young People

Resources	School Processes	Partnership Work
Wishes and Feelings	Children's Champions	TAF
3 houses	Wellbeing Assemblies	Wellbeing project with Sheffield University
"Blob Tree"	Open Door Policy	Place 2 Be
Worry boxes	Questionnaires	Foundation 92
Safe Spaces	"Safe spaces" to talk	Parenting classes
Feelings Charts	Pastoral Care	
Questionnaires	School Council	
	Workshops	

As you can see above, Salford schools are using a range of approaches to engage with children and young people on a regular basis.

The effectiveness of these approaches was frequently linked to the culture within the schools and the focus on relationships that the children have with staff

“Children have an awareness that how they feel is important to us and we support them. This culture is embedded”

“It’s important that we capture children’s voices”

“In school children can feel valued, wanted and respected – outside they may not have those affirmations”

Quotes from schools relating to positive relationships

One school is currently working with Sheffield University on a Mental Wellbeing project where 2 staff have been trained as Mental Health first aiders. Children access various sessions such as relaxation and breathing exercise. Whilst this is still being evaluated, the Headteacher can already see a positive impact for children.

What became clear when we conducted the consultation was the variety of approaches and interventions being used by schools. Safe spaces, one off projects, and processes developed as direct result of engagement with pupils have become an intrinsic part of school life - all providing opportunities for pupils to open up about their worries and anxieties. The issues being raised are varied, with some being identified across the city and others being quite specific to a geographical area or a particular culture.

What are children’s biggest concerns?

Common Themes	Specific concerns
<p>online bullying (increased exposure to different platforms during COVID restrictions and home- schooling)</p> <p>COVID related anxieties – about family members contracting the virus and the pandemic in general</p> <p>Jewish schools report pupils have fears around hate crime / anti semitism</p> <p>their friendships with other children</p> <p>Concerns about transition to high school</p> <p>Worries about home life</p>	<p>One school – when looking at the importance of getting a good night’s sleep – discovered how anxious young children were about the anti-social behaviour happening on their streets. Fighting, fires and vehicles racing up and down was keeping younger pupils awake and causing them to worry about what was happening outside their own homes.</p>

In addition, some schools spoke about pupils having specific worries, that although not common across all schools are clearly issues that warrant discussion and response.

Although contact with Jewish schools has been limited for this consultation, fear of hate crime and anti-Semitism mentioned by one of our schools could potentially be an issue for other schools. Further consultation could explore this issue and identify if schools require support or wish to raise this as a topic for discussion.

Despite the concerns raised by pupils, it was the schools' approaches and examples of positive outcomes which often led to interviewers leaving the consultation uplifted by the wonderful examples shared.

Salford schools frequently have a huge impact on the lives of individual pupils and prior to this consultation there will be many of these positive interventions which may not have been shared outside of the school environment.

The use of Listening Loops, a Salford resource for sharing good practice, identifying issues and taking positive action, would really benefit schools and enable them to not only highlight their achievements but share with other schools any innovative approaches which have resulted in positive outcomes.

Schools are creating new and innovative ways of working all the time. Some schools conduct their own review of new projects to assess the effectiveness and highlight the positives.

Examples include.

- Parents groups for support on a range of issues
- Internal school systems for monitoring low level concerns
- Parent workshops to raise awareness on topics that pupils are learning
- Projects to address bullying which include pupils who have been bullied coming together with pupils who have been accused of bullying

All schools plus others will be encouraged to use the Listening Loops as a way to highlight their innovative projects and share good practice with others.

Diversity

Salford has a strong commitment to tackling inequality which is reflected in [The Salford Way](#) a city-wide approach to ensure partners work together to build a fairer and more inclusive Salford for all. A key part of this approach is the [Salford Equality Strategy](#) which was launched in November 2021

“... a partnership of public, Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) and private sector organisations who are committed to improving inclusion in the city through the sharing of learning and best practice.”

Having a good understanding of, and commitment to diversity is essential to equality and inclusion and our next question provided the opportunity to draw on the school's

experience and capture some of the relevant issues within the school and also for the wider community.

When considering how schools engage with children, young people, and families, we asked schools about diversity and what this means within the school. We wanted to explore how children and staff are made aware of diversity and what considerations are made to policy and practice to meet the needs of children and parents with protected characteristics.

This one question drew out a wide range of responses from schools. As expected, there is a huge difference across the city with schools meeting the needs of the demographic they serve whilst working hard to ensure key messages are delivered positively and sensitively.

There were some concerns raised by one school which resulted in the SSCP Participation Lead co-ordinating discussions with diversity leads on how best to support schools around all aspects of diversity. Whilst this enabled these initial discussions to take place, there would be real value in Salford exploring diversity further to look at some of the challenges but also to tap into the wealth of experience and innovative approaches being delivered by schools and in Salford.

Schools who have had the benefit of long-standing relationships with families and got to understand the cultural expectations and norms, expressed their confidence in addressing diversity within the school. They were able to consider sensitive issues confidently and ensure that any raising of awareness, whether that be educating in the classroom or challenging inappropriate language and behaviour outside the classroom, was done so sensitively and effectively.

For example, schools who accommodate pupils from Salford Travelling Community have a good understanding of their lifestyle and are flexible with attendance policies working with families to ensure a 2-way response between the community and the school.

Similarly, Jewish schools who understand the importance of consistent messages across all schools appreciate how topics concerning sexuality, sexual abuse and online safety are sensitive subjects for their community. Nevertheless, they find ways of maintaining that balance and ensuring their policies reflect essential standards in safeguarding whilst taking in the cultural needs of the community.

Other schools recognised that the demographic of their local area had changed significantly and constant changes in policy, understanding and new emerging issues may result in some staff needing additional training to ensure a consistent approach.

Although the consultation did not involve all schools in Salford it did provide an overall view of a significant number of schools across geographical location, and it is evident that there is a wealth of experience across the city in terms of knowledge and understanding of our diverse communities. Schools recognise the importance of finding ways to ensure inclusion in all aspects of school but particularly around addressing diversity.

Children may not have English as their first language or perhaps their families do not speak English at all, schools work hard to involve all pupils, creating inclusive spaces and sharing cultural diversity.

The Jewish schools who contributed to the consultation, demonstrated excellent skills in engaging with their own communities, addressing complex safeguarding issues sensitively and appropriately and also understanding those specific issues, such as antisemitism and fear of hate crime which are relevant to their communities.

Similarly, schools which are embedded in the most deprived neighbourhoods of Salford, understand how deprivation, unemployment and lack of opportunity can impact on families, potentially leading to mistrust and hostility towards services. These schools form trusting relationships which enable education, awareness raising and inclusion. They provide safe spaces to address diversity using community development approaches which adapt to suit the needs of the community.

Specialist schools which support children and young people with additional needs, are experts in ensuring that young people's voices are heard, and that essential learning is delivered.

Schools have developed a range of skills and provide a high level of expertise in not only understanding the communities they work with but also in ensuring that children and young people have access to learning and understanding in relation to diversity. A deeper analysis of the various approaches used across the city, tapping into the wealth of expertise which particular schools already have would enable an acknowledgement of the positive work being delivered, a recognition of the gaps in understanding and an opportunity for shared learning across schools.

Engaging with Parents and Families

In this section of the questionnaire, we also asked schools to share with us the experience of engaging with parents and families. Schools provided some wonderful examples of how they regularly engage with parents and, in doing so, how they build positive relationships developing trust and rapport.

Some of the ways schools engage with parents and families are structured and planned, such as parent workshops or inviting parents to take part in school activity – where schools and parents work together in supporting the children.

There were also many examples given of how schools create a culture where parents feel very comfortable to engage in conversation with school staff. This might be at the school gates when collecting or dropping of the children, or when parents take it upon themselves to come to the school for advice and support on a range of issues.

As addressed at the start of this report, safeguarding is not just about making referrals it is considering the 6 Principles of Safeguarding including prevention, protection, and empowerment.

Salford has a good reputation in terms of strength-based approaches, adopting models and ways of working which put families at the heart of what we do. For example the [Standards for Listening](#) has been developed as a direct result of an engagement project with children young people and families to find out what was important to them.

[The Listening Hub](#) is another example of Salford's commitment to engagement with communities and partner agencies alike and is growing from strength to strength, leading to this; the Education Listening Hub Schools' Consultation, and regular events involving parents, young people and practitioners coming together to explore relevant issues.

The Education Listening Hub has shown how many schools in Salford are already working in ways which reflect the strength-based approaches which have become an essential part of Salford's approach to Safeguarding.

In areas where community connection is strong, where parents engage with the school staff on a regular basis the opportunity for engagement with parents is embedded in the culture of the school. This enables early intervention, positive engagement and ultimately prevention of harm. Some schools operate at the heart of the community in which they serve, and families will often approach school staff when they have concerns and do not know where to go to for help and support

"Schools are very aware of what is going on for families -this is a real positive"

"We know the community -everyone socialises with one another in and outside the school"

"So, when we have to involve services parents are willing to engage because of the trusting relationship we have with them"

"We are not afraid of have conversations with families. We build trust with families. Not afraid to let families know we may have to pass things on"

The schools who adopt this approach have organically developed into what I consider to be "**Community hubs.**" Staff in these schools have often been in post many years, some are from the local area, parents who remain in the area they were born are ex-pupils of the school and consequently good relationships between families and the school already exist.

These types of schools are often in areas of greater deprivation with limited resources or services in the neighbourhood. We also saw examples of these schools within the Jewish community

The School as a Community Hub

The school may be the only central facility available to the community and Headteachers/Safeguarding leads described how trusting relationships are easy to form due to the existing links between schools and families.

There are also examples of schools who do not have the benefit of generational links or those long-standing relationships in the community but who nevertheless were able to develop projects and innovative ways of working to establish this kind of culture – A community Hub within the school

Although this approach may not be suitable for all schools, due to demographics or geographics of the building in relation to the community, you can see from the summary below how beneficial it is for those schools who are already seen as The Community Hub within a neighbourhood. This work is essential in the context of safeguarding; however, I am not sure how much this is celebrated, valued, and encouraged. From what we have seen in the consultation and the positive impacts these approaches bring not just to the school but to the community as a whole, there is certainly mileage in looking deeper into those schools who are operating in this way.

The table below highlights how specific principles of safeguarding, Protection, prevention and empowerment can create a school environment that emulates a community hub and more importantly, enables positive outcomes for families.

Protection	Parental engagement – always desired whatever level of referral	Open honest dialogue even when a referral to Bridge is required Trust & Rapport is essential. One school reported: “A parent was upset when referral made. Now she makes a beeline for me to discuss her concerns
Prevention	Raising awareness of safeguarding with parents	Parent Workshops Conversations at the school gate Parents & school supports parents together
Empowerment	Parents seeking support from the school	Parents see the school as a trusted space Alerting the school Asking for help

Salford has a similar model in the 4 , [Family Hubs \(children's centres\)](#) which have already been established. These are described to parents and practitioners as

“.. places in your local community offering services and support for families from different agencies in one building. Services include, Antenatal, Child’s Health, Early Help, Play Sessions, Parenting support and more.”

Salford is already seeing huge benefit from the 4 Family Hub centres, and those schools who are already operating as Community Hubs would complement this model of working. As strength-based working and community engagement are central to the model of

delivery for Salford, further exploration of schools who operate as a Community Hub, with recognition of their value and how their work, could complement wider priorities for the city would be of huge benefit.

Part Four: Next steps for the Listening Hub

The interviews enabled schools to highlight both challenges and successes in relation to the 3 areas we looked at:

- Safeguarding and Early Help
- Engaging with partner agencies
- Gathering the views of Children, Young People & Families

The consultation also gave us an opportunity to talk about the Listening Hub and to find out from schools how they would like to engage with the Hub and what outcomes they would want.

An important issue for schools was for the Listening Hub to address some of this issue raised as part of this Schools' Consultation. Schools would like the Hub to provide a way to identify the challenges they are facing, for the SSCP and other partners to understand this and for the wider Listening Hub to provide a mechanism to enable action to address these actions.

One school highlighted that the challenges they are seeing, not only impact the children but can also affect the wellbeing of school staff. The consultation allowed reflection, a way to consider the bigger picture and for schools to consider not just their challenges but also the huge positive impact they have on families despite these challenges.

Without the space to reflect, to share and to explore it is no surprise that Headteachers are concerned about wellbeing of staff. Whilst Salford is to be commended for the raft of resources to support the emotional wellbeing of frontline staff across the city, it may be that schools are not always aware of what is available such as [Self Care Resources](#) provided by [Partners in Salford](#)

What became clear in undertaking the interviews was that, despite the challenges faced, many schools are consistently providing excellent support to pupils and their families. There may be benefit in exploring this further with schools or looking at the data at a later stage and finding good examples of this taking place.

A strength-based approach would take the focus away from what is not available in terms of services, capacity and resources, and instead focus on the positives - how schools are ensuring an excellent level of support for families despite the constraints of limited resources and waiting lists which external partner agencies are experiencing.

As already acknowledged in this report, schools talked about staff going "above and beyond" to support children and families. The opportunity to highlight this way of working and celebrate those successes would provide recognition of good practice.

Following the positive feedback from the consultation, several schools identified 1-2-1 as a preferred option for interacting with the Listening Hub. A scheduled meeting to allow Headteachers or safeguarding leads to reflect on achievements and challenges as a way to celebrate the progress they had made in both education and supporting children and families.

Hub representatives in the school were seen as a potential benefit, to ensure that the commitment to the Listening Hub remains a priority. Ten schools put forward the need for an “identified person,” who would be the representative for the school to link with the Hub and share information back and forth.

We had the opportunity to consult with a school outside of Salford, one of several out of area provisions where Salford young people attend. This school felt that to have a “link person” from within SSCP or Early Help team would really benefit out of area schools: a named person to help them navigate the services in Salford which they may not be familiar with.

Schools considered regular opportunities to meet up would also keep the Hub active and relevant. These could be thematic across the city or within clusters to focus on issues that be relevant to a locality – highlighting here the positive benefits already seen with school clusters. Ideas already suggested for forums included:

“debates/discussions about current issues e.g., CCE”

“opportunities to share good practice”

“yearly events for bigger issues”

“ensuring the SSCP priority reflects the challenges within schools “

Focus groups could be set for specific priorities such as Domestic Abuse, school attendance, whatever emerges as a theme from this or future consultations. Issues raised by schools would form agenda which could be discussed in forums.

Schools highlighted several ways they felt they could connect with the Education Listening Hub:

Information sharing

- Utilise our schools Cluster
- Emails, newsletters
- SSCP resources such as 7-minute briefings are seen as highly effective

Hub Rep within school

- an “identified person”, who would be the representative for the school to link with the Education Listening Hub and share information back and forth. Ensure this remains a priority

1-2-1 Meetings/Coaching /Consultation

- So many schools told us they enjoyed the interviews. The time for reflection and to highlight what was going well was a welcome change from feeling overwhelmed at trying to meet the competing priorities within school

Forums /Meetings/Events /Focus groups

- “debates discussions about current issues e.g., CCE”
- “opportunities to share good practice”
- “yearly events for bigger issues”
- Ensure SSCP priority reflect challenges within schools

Schools spoke very positively about existing network opportunities in Salford. The cluster meetings which bring together schools in specific areas have provided a huge benefit in terms of shared learning and exploring issues relevant within a cluster. Similarly, the Jewish schools we spoke with, welcomed the regular monthly contact and updates from Cathy Starbuck and would like to see more of this networking developed.

Many of the schools consulted have mentioned the effectiveness of the [SSCP website](#) and how regular [updates](#) on here would serve schools well. [7-minute briefings](#) are considered an excellent way to disseminate information and raise awareness.

The Education Listening Hub consultation enabled us to promote the wider Listening Hub, and across the board, this was received with enthusiasm. Schools really welcome the idea of having somewhere to share information and learn from other schools and the wider Safeguarding Children Partnership.

Whilst the consultation enabled us to promote the Listening Hub to some of the schools, it is clear that there is more to be done to ensure ALL schools have the same understanding of, and commitment to, the ongoing development and work of the Listening Hub.

“Communication and Marketing IS KEY. If marketed well and schools recognise the value of it (Education Listening Hub) they will be more inclined to use it”

Additional Findings

The importance of Relationship Building:

Throughout the consultation, and the analysis undertaken in producing this report, what has come out strongly for me, time and time again, is the importance of **relationship building**.

As someone who has worked in frontline practitioner roles, as strategic workforce lead and in recent years consultancy, my perspective on service delivery, community engagement, multi-agency working, and safeguarding has widened – but my values and principles of engagement have remained consistent.

I am a Youth and Community professional, and these principles have stayed with me and become stronger over the years, whether working with the Community, Statutory or Multi-Agency environments.

Consequently, it was no surprise to me seeing the extent of success, the positive impact on children's, young people, and families; the identification and response to concerns, and the strength-based work which has been achieved by schools who understand the importance of **relationship building** in their work.

Reasons why building positive relationships is essential to safeguarding in schools:

- Parents approach the school for help – the school is seen as a community hub
- Where schools have the trust of the parent, there is increased engagement with services
- Existing networks/clusters offer support across schools, sharing good practice and exploring issues.
- Pupils know who to go to in the school – they seek support
- Schools feel supported by partner agencies when they link with a named person
- Where School has good relationship with EH Coordinator ALL report positive outcomes
- Long serving staff know the whole family - trust and rapport has already been established

Youth & Community professionals are not alone in understanding the importance of relationship building; all frontline practitioners in Health & Social Care are encouraged to build rapport, to develop relationships which demonstrate trust and honesty.

However, when we consider safeguarding, multi-agency approaches, thresholds with time critical assessments, the constraints of agencies with limited resources, reduced staff levels or lack of funding, it is no surprise that the essential elements of relationship building are not always possible for all professionals concerned – **and that is ok**.

Your professional role, the agency you represent, the time constraints of the agenda you are working to, will always determine how much time you spend with a young person or their family. So long as there is at least one professional involved with a child, a young person or their family who DOES have the capacity to forge that positive relationship, positive outcomes are far more likely to be achieved. Having at least one professional,

who has time to build that relationship, who can see the overarching factors at play and can help young people and their families to see the bigger picture, a partnership such as SSCP can feel confident that this essential ingredient is in place.

Relationship building is not just an important element of the work we do with families, it is also essential in approaches to joint working, multi-agency responses and all our contacts with partner agencies.

When we are not able to prioritise the need for relationship building in our joint working arrangements, internal processes, or our work with communities - positive outcomes are much less likely.

When time is not spent on relationship building outcomes are not as positive :

- Schools can feel isolated, overwhelmed by lack of capacity both within and outside of schools
- Parents can become reluctant to engage, mistrusting the school and outside agencies who aim to support them.
- Practitioners feel frustrated, feel they are “going around in circles”
- Although it has to be said that all schools go above and beyond to ensure pupils can access staff for support, when positive relationships are not formed between agencies and parents, pupils will miss out on early intervention and support.

The consultation has identified just how many schools are playing this key essential role in building those positive relationship. However, I am not sure that they are all valuing this work or that this is being encouraged and recognised externally. This section of the report aims to throw some light on this issue and encourage the Salford Safeguarding Children Partnership to consider the evidence, recognise the extent to which schools’ factor in this role, and place a priority on relationship building as a key factor in all that we do.

Themes to explore further

This interim report demonstrates that the Education Listening Hub has provided an effective way to “**capitalise on the wealth of experience of education professionals.**”

The consultation has ensured schools have strong links with the Listening Hub, understanding its purpose, and ensuring the **Voices of the community** is at the heart of service development.

The initial consultation has already provided a wealth of data and this report summarises some of the emerging themes. However, each one of the themes could be explored more fully to uncover commonalities, draw out innovation and look at ways good practice can be celebrated and shared.

Early Help School Coordinators

For schools that have worked well with EH Coordinators, and where capacity, knowledge and skills within the school exist as a result, they have developed their own packages and systems to identify need and offer support to their families at the earliest opportunity, without the need for an early help referral.

. However, it is also evident that some schools have not yet established a strong relationship with their EH coordinator, or it may be that roles are not yet clearly understood.

Some schools do not have the benefit of having staff whose sole role is that of Safeguarding and trying to balance the teaching role alongside the safeguarding role can be extremely difficult. Having support and guidance from a named person will really benefit these schools. This issue alone highlights the need for the Safeguarding in Schools Officer role and the added benefits provided by the support from the Early Help practitioners.

Going back to the consultation could identify strengths and gaps and help to formulate an action plan for building on those relationships and strengthening the partnership model between schools and the work of the Early Help team.

This has been raised by one of the Early Help Team who has been involved in interviews in the school and recognised how the work can be strengthened by asking:

“What’s going well? What can we build on? Where do we need to connect with school more?”

Emotional Wellbeing of Children and Young People.

This report has picked out elements of the engagement work schools regularly undertake with students and families, looking at interventions and concerns raised. Evidence is already emerging on the impact the pandemic has had on the emotional wellbeing of children and young people. There are real opportunities to look at what the consultation has uncovered and build on this. Exploration could include deeper analysis of this data or consulting further with remaining schools to identify a wider range of interventions and positive outcomes.

During the consultation we asked Headteachers and Safeguarding Leads to tell us about their “shining stars.” We wanted to hear more about those members of staff who demonstrate real skills in engaging with children, young people and families. Who are the experts, the staff who people warm to, the ones who are good listeners, who initiate conversation with ease? These are the shining stars – and from the response we got it is clear that these experts in engagement are not always those with specific safeguarding roles/duties. They could be teaching assistants, playground supervisors, canteen staff, volunteers or parent helpers.

Salford could benefit from this level of expertise by creating a network of these “shining stars” identified by schools –those staff who engage well with pupils. Once again, building on the strengths within schools which the consultation has highlighted, to celebrate and share the excellent work which is already happening

COVID – The response of schools

The consultation was carried out at time when we all faced a global pandemic, with COVID restrictions impacting on schools and their communities in a way that no one could have ever envisaged. Despite this, schools found ways of overcoming barriers to ensure that education continued, and that the welfare of pupils remained paramount.

The report has provided some examples of the innovative approaches schools have undertaken in their direct support to families over the last 2 years - there would be great value in exploring this further. Consideration could be given, not only to the innovation that took place during this time, but also thinking about how this work positively benefitted families and ensured a good level of safeguarding.

Schools reported that the increase in referrals may be as a direct result of increased stress within families. Domestic Abuse, employment issues, financial worries, increase use of alcohol and other drugs have all been identified as having a potential impact on family life and the emotional wellbeing of children.

It is clear that COVID restrictions have impacted on service delivery and the wellbeing of communities. The consultation has without a doubt highlighted many positive examples in terms of how schools have responded.

These positive examples of innovation and pro-active work by schools during the pandemic is a stark contrast to tragic cases highlighted by several recent CSPRs (Child Safeguarding Practice Review) which occurred during this period. Lack of contact from services, families facing isolation and children's welfare placed at high risk due to COVID restrictions have been highlighted in National Press raising real concern from Local Authorities, practitioners and members of the public.

Whilst we know that investigations need to take place, and undoubtedly there were errors of judgement by professionals which may have played a part in these tragedies, the consultation here in Salford has shown another side – where schools literally went above and beyond to ensure that children's welfare remained a priority. It raises a question about prevention in safeguarding and the extent to which this kind of work, the innovation which occurred during these un-precedented times, has ensured that children were kept safe and that families were supported in the best way possible, despite the “lockdown” and subsequent COVID restrictions.

Impact analysis in terms of COVID and schools' response would look deeper into the data, perhaps build on it by contacting all schools. Salford could then consider the innovation that took place, explore the outcomes and consider how much these approaches have ensured safeguarding through **Prevention, Protection and Empowerment**

Diversity

Initial interviews with schools drew out some excellent examples of how schools meet the needs of the diverse communities they serve. Schools who are well established in their neighbourhoods, for example those we have described as “Community Hubs,” understand the cultural diversity and are able to embrace the challenges to ensure pupils achieve equality of opportunity.

Those schools who already engage effectively with diverse communities can provide a wonderful model for schools across the city. Sharing examples of good, perhaps by using the Listening Loops, would provide essential learning and effective models of working across the city. Some schools reflected how they were experiencing changes in local demographics and are keen to maintain supportive, effective practices to meet the needs of the whole community whilst raising awareness across all neighbourhood.

Continued work regarding practice development in relation to diversity should consider:

- Support and guidance to schools who may wish to adapt policies to meet the needs of diverse communities, whilst ensuring a consistent approach that meets the safeguarding guidance for all schools.
- Networking or learning opportunities to explore how a range of issues, such as locality, culture, religion can influence how everyone (staff, pupils and wider communities) views societal norms in the context of safeguarding.

These ways of working, balancing of policy requirement within cultural norms could be explored further. Is consideration is given to the fact that what is acceptable within one family/neighbourhood may not be so in another?

Learning & Development

The consultation provided a space for schools to reflect on practice, consider challenges, share important themes and highlight innovation. This is exactly what the SSCP is aiming for in developing a Listening Hub for Salford. Whilst this report has touched on some important issues in terms of knowledge, skills and experience, there would be huge benefit to consider in more detail how the consultation can inform learning and development across the partnership.

Nevertheless, there are key messages which have already emerged which should remain at the forefront of action taken in respect of Learning and Development

- Diversity- ensure this is at the heart of further exploration and discussions on practice development.
- Develop a clear consistent approach for all schools with a recognition of how “low risk” behaviour may escalate if not challenged and addressed earlier.
- Measure the impact of prevention and training through ongoing evaluation.
- Ensure schools are aware of, and continue to link with, the Listening Hub/ Education Listening Hub to highlight emerging themes, to share good practice, to raise concerns.

New Themes – not yet uncovered:

The report summarises some excellent core themes. However, the data analysis is far from complete. A strong recommendation would be to continue to use this data – ask questions based on current themes across the children's workforce, go back to the interviews see what the consultation uncovered and use this to inform ongoing practice.

Further work should focus on the strengths within practice, highlighting schools which overcome challenges to ensure positive outcomes for children and families ensuring high levels of safeguarding in prevention, identification, and response.

Stay inquisitive with the data collected so far in this consultation, build on what has already been uncovered, provide more opportunities to share findings and inform practice.

Whilst continued data analysis would no doubt be beneficial; a recommendation would be for the SSCP to consider the “ownership of the data.”

- Where does the current consultation sit?
- Who ensures it remains up-to-date and accurate?
- When would further analysis of the data take place and who would decide?
- If deemed necessary and worthwhile who will conduct further consultation with schools?

The consultation as it stands does provide a wealth of information and it may be that SSCP considers the project complete. However, if the recommendations are given consideration in terms of ongoing work these points will need to be agreed within the partnership.

The consultation will highlight initial themes to inform discussion and practice development. However, a deeper focus on one specific theme may uncover other areas for discussion, partnership working and practice development. If, for example, some schools are not seeing the Early Help process as a benefit for all families, further analysis of the feedback from across the consultation may uncover an example of good practice from another school that could inform and help other schools and improve outcomes.

Recommendations

1. Schools deliver the 6 principles of safeguarding regularly and effectively
Prevention, Protection, Empowerment, Accountability, Partnership, Proportionality
SSCP can maintain and continue to strengthen this culture of safeguarding within Salford by **embedding the 6 principles into the work of the partnership**, through learning & development and by promoting the sharing of good practice in relation to the principles.
2. Embedding the 6 principles as above will **develop a clear consistent approach for all schools** with a recognition that “low risk” behaviour may escalate if not challenged and addressed earlier.
3. **Measure the impact of prevention and training** through ongoing evaluation and the use of Listening Loops to show how training informs practice. The Listening Loop can evidence how delegates have put new learning into practice, highlighting positive outcomes and examples of good practice to share with other practitioners.
4. **Consider a detailed review of schools’ approach to COVID**, to draw out the innovative ways schools adapted and also the impact this had on the safety and wellbeing of children. A review of this period, from 2020 to 2022 could also consider the impact on referrals and how families in Salford felt they were supported during this period.
5. The consultation enabled schools to reflect on practice in a way they had not done before and the feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with Headteachers and DSLs expressing how beneficial this had been. **Encourage schools to adopt this approach and find time to reflect and review their practice** to draw on both strengths and challenges
6. Ensure Diversity remains at the heart of partnership working. **Engage and support schools to adapt policies to meet the needs of diverse communities**, whilst ensuring a consistent approach. Consider how locality, culture, religion etc may impact on how people (staff, parents, pupils) define and understand issues. What is acceptable within one family/neighbourhood may not be so in another.
7. Enhance partnership approaches by raising awareness of what already exists and highlighting what is needed. **Strengthen links with the VCSE sector** by ensuring schools forge links with Salford CVS, Neighbourhood teams, and existing networks.
8. Engagement with children, young people and families is essential to the on-going work of SSCP and schools play a crucial role. **Schools’ engagement with the community should be encouraged and celebrated.**
9. The Listening Hub may benefit from **creating a network of representatives** within schools who can be called upon to help with future engagement with children & young people. The consultation has provided a contact list of “Shining Stars” –

those members of staff who are recognised for their skills in engaging with children, young people and parents. Consider how the Listening Hub would like to engage with these practitioners, but also how the schools and these “shining stars” see their role and how they would like to engage with the Listening Hub.

10. The consultation has drawn significant attention to schools who have evolved into **Community Hubs**. The report has shown how these schools are extremely beneficial in terms of engaging with local communities and ensuring effective, timely safeguarding processes are in place. **Consider how these Community Hubs can enhance existing models within Salford** and complement the work of the 4 x Family Hubs
11. Throughout the consultation ‘Relationship Building’ has been key to effective safeguarding in terms of engagement, identification and effective practice. Ensure that **Relationship Building is encouraged, enhanced and valued**. This could be achieved by raising the importance of this issue via learning and development and networking opportunities or by asking schools to provide good examples of when positive relationships have produced good outcomes for children, young people and families.
12. The consultation has already strengthened schools’ engagement with SSCP and the Listening Hub – this needs to be continued. There needs to be a plan in place (before the end of the Education Listening Hub project) to **keep the connection between schools and the SSCP “live”** and build on what this consultation has already achieved.
13. Ensure all schools have a good understanding of the ongoing work of the Listening Hub and recognise the value of this approach. **Ensure an effective communication and marketing strategy** for schools about the aims of the Listening Hub
14. **Increase awareness of Listening Loops for schools** –show them how these can be used to highlight issues/ showcase good practice / feed into the work of Listening Hub. Emphasise that this could be a way for schools to “shine a light” on good practice and provide a way for schools to continue to inform practice.
15. **Analysing the data is an ongoing process** and there is real benefit in this continuing after the Education Listening Hub project ends.
16. **Clarification is required in respect of the “Ownership” of the data** created by this Education Listening Hub consultation.
17. Use the existing data and consider continuation of the consultation with additional schools to **conduct more detailed reviews** in those areas already highlighted in this report:
 - a. Early Help School Coordinators
 - b. Emotional Wellbeing of Children and Young People
 - c. COVID – How Salford Schools responded effectively
 - d. Diversity
 - e. Learning & Development – how the consultation informs practice.

Final Key message for Salford

Schools have highlighted the challenges they face with increased referrals, limited capacity from partner agencies and an expectation that they play a significant role from Early Help through to CIN and CP.

*Nevertheless, the consultation showed time and time again how schools “**go above and beyond**” in always ensuring effective safeguarding.*

There is much to celebrate with schools providing many examples of good practice particularly their COVID response.

Capture the evidence, inform your practice but more importantly:

Celebrate the resilience, innovation and forward thinking of your schools.

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