

Pan-London safeguarding children culture & faith project 2010-11



1. Introduction

- 1.1 This is an action-learning Project which aims to promote a step-change in safeguarding London's children living in minority ethnic, culture or faith communities or groups. The Project is being co-ordinated by the London Safeguarding Children Board (London Board) and funded by the Migrant Impact Fund.
- 1.2 Over the 18 months of the Project (ending in November 2011) the London Board and the London boroughs, together with specialist voluntary sector agencies, are undertaking activities to:
 - Promote statutory agency safeguarding children partnership working with local minority ethnic and faith communities and groups
 - Provide appropriate specialist guidance for professionals to assist them in safeguarding children from minority ethnic and faith communities and groups; and
 - Raise awareness in minority ethnic and faith communities and groups about safeguarding children issues.

2. London context

- 2.1 Agencies and their staff, communities and faith groups seeking to safeguard London's 1.6 million children face unique challenges. London is the most ethnically diverse city in the UK, with 40% of Londoners belonging to a minority ethnic group. Families from the same nationality and faith groups of the same affiliation are settled in communities or attend places of worship in localities all over London. In newly immigrant minority ethnic communities parenting practices can be different to the accepted norms in the UK. In addition, the responsibility for child safety can be vested in community leaders, who may have limited knowledge about UK legislation relating to child rearing, and who may not be informed about safeguarding procedures or safety checks.
- 2.2 Whilst, minority ethnic communities' concerns in relation to their children mirror the concerns of the host nation and the statutory services¹, many communities do not sufficiently understand the role of the statutory agencies generally and LA children's social care services in particular, to work in partnership with them.
- 2.3 Professionals supporting minority ethnic families to safeguard their children have to take a range of factors into account, such as the need to identify/give weight to a family's new immigrant and minority ethnic background and experiences², including threat of deportation, the impact on parenting of not being able to speak English, and of inadequate and temporary housing, poverty etc. Consideration has to be given to the influence of religious/faith affiliation and precepts on family behaviours; and professionals need to be aware of political sensitivities when supporting families from within their own communities

¹ These are discipline and tensions between younger and older generations of immigrant families: truanting, drug and alcohol misuse, anti-social behaviour and gangs and weapons, sexual promiscuity, especially for girls and young women. See Domestic violence. *Community Partnership Project, LSCB 2007*)

² Evidence suggests that BME groups are more likely to suffer housing difficulties or homelessness and that BME people's experience of homelessness is often affected by their ethnicity.

<http://www.homeless.org.uk/inyourarea/london/interest/BME>

2.4 Trust needs to be built between statutory services and the third sector and minority ethnic community and faith groups to prioritise the protection of children within the family.

3. Project structure & activity

3.1 This Project is being co-ordinated by the London Board, supported by LB Bexley, it comprises three parts:

- a) The London boroughs of Barnet, Bexley, Brent, Enfield, Greenwich, Hackney, Haringey, Merton, Newham, Sutton and Tower Hamlets will pilot projects designed to promote statutory and voluntary agency safeguarding children partnership working and build safeguarding children capacity with local minority ethnic and faith communities and groups.
- b) The 32 London LSCBs are running consultation focus groups for the children, young people, parents and other adults in their local communities and for the paid or unpaid workers in the local statutory or voluntary sector to gather views on how to improve safeguarding for London's children living in minority ethnic, culture or faith communities or groups;

The LSCBs have also disseminated an on-line survey link with the focus group questions to local statutory or voluntary sector professionals:

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/faithandculture>

- c) LB Bexley is interviewing all the London LSCBs to map activity and aspiration in London for partnership for safeguarding London's children living in minority ethnic, culture or faith communities or groups.

3.2 Project activity is directed and supported by an Operations Group, which reports progress to the London Board's Culture & Faith Subgroup.

4. Project outputs/outcomes

4.1 Anticipated outcomes from the action-learning part of the Project are an increase in safety of children in the local minority ethnic communities and faith groups of the participating boroughs. These improvements should be reflected across London through good cross-London communication during and after the Project, together with London-wide dissemination of the Project outputs.

4.2 The Project outputs include the development of:

- a) **A Project Report** describing and reviewing the Project activity, findings and outcomes, and potentially making recommendations for future consideration and action;
- b) **Guidance** on culture and faith issues to accompany the London Child Protection Procedures
- c) **A Strategy Toolkit** to assist LSCBs engage with local communities whose culture and faith distinguishes them from the host nation
- d) **A Training Toolkit** to assist professionals to better safeguard children whose circumstances include culture and faith issues

4.3 Potential improvements include:

- A reduction in the disproportionality of children and young people from mainly new immigrant minority ethnic communities and faith groups who are harmed or killed by adults or their peers.

- An increase in the number of referrals of concerns to LA children's social care from members of new immigrant minority ethnic communities and faith groups about the safety and well-being of children in their communities and groups.
- Potentially also the growth of organisations within the communities to promote their children's safety and well-being.
- Corporate ownership of the integration, community cohesion and well-being issues facing children and their families from new immigrant minority ethnic communities and faith groups.
- The mainstreaming of awareness, understanding of the impact on minority ethnic children and families of their experience since arriving in the UK (and in some cases, the events which precipitated their arrival). Significantly increased competence in professional and voluntary staff responses to the needs and risks of harm experienced within London's new immigrant communities. This would be evidenced, for example, in the information gathered for assessment to inform safeguarding, health or housing interventions child and/or their family.

5. Borough projects

5.1 **LB Barnet** – the Barnet project is piloting materials, toolkits and information with variety of community and faith groups (including holding focus groups and developing learning sets); developing a voluntary and community sector safeguarding advice service to include the needs of more marginal faith and unattached 'migrant' communities; supporting progress in safeguarding by faith groups and working with Barnet's Junior Safeguarding Board (Voice of Young People in Safeguarding) to include the voice of the child input to the Pan-London Project.

LB Barnet is also engaging with supplementary schools.

5.2 **LB Bexley** – Bexley's substantive contribution to the Pan-London Project is co-ordinating key elements of the Project. This includes supporting the London LSCBs to run local focus groups to develop a better London-wide understanding of the themes of concern and good practice for different minority ethnic communities and faith groups in relation to safeguarding children; co-ordinating pan-London focus groups for community and faith leaders, and other high profile individuals and agencies; mapping current progress in statutory agency and minority ethnic community and faith group partnership across London etc.

LB Bexley is also running a project piloting the establishment of community parenting support groups to assist families from minority ethnic communities and faith groups to manage the inter-generational tensions which can reduce parents ability to promote their children's welfare and safeguard them from harm.

5.3 **LB Brent** – the Brent project is a comprehensive community engagement exercise, followed by establishment of a community-led sub-group within the LSCB framework. The sub-group will develop an ongoing engagement / communications strategy between the LSCB and the local minority ethnic community and faith groups. The strategy will inform frontline professionals about the community; it will provide a framework for capacity building activity in the local community to safeguard children including identifying risk of harm and what to do if there are concerns about a child.

5.4 **LB Enfield** – the Enfield project involves training for professionals, church and community leaders and parents aimed at promoting prevention and early intervention leading to reduction in referrals to LA children's social care, improved understanding

by African parents of safeguarding and child protection legislation and its implications for their families, better understanding and addressing of African children and their families' needs; and more confidence from professionals in responding to African children and their families.

- 5.5 **LB Greenwich** – the Greenwich project aims to improve the engagement of the voluntary sector with the Greenwich Safeguarding Children Board (GSCB) with the goal of improving safeguarding practice across the sector. The GSCB is undertaking focused work with the voluntary sector, through Greenwich AVS in six areas: participation, information sharing and gathering, training, child protection policies and procedures and consultation, advice and guidance.
- 5.6 **LB Hackney** – The Hackney project involves young people from the Youth Parliament to designing a questionnaire and training them in interviewing skills, recording and in report writing. They will then approach Turkish/Kurdish organisations and seek to interview young people and parents on the topics of HBV, domestic violence and force marriage, as well as the interviewee's perspective on wider safeguarding issues. The YP will also seek to interview other groups of young people and parents to use a comparative approach. The YP will develop a DVD on 'hearing the voices of young people about the issues they face with regard to safeguarding and what they think will work in reducing the risk'.
- 5.7 **LB Haringey** – the Haringey project is identifying and evaluating the current London safeguarding children in relation to BME communities and faith groups in London; and developing a best practice training pack which will form the basis of the Project's Training Toolkit.
- 5.8 **LB Merton** – the Merton project is seeking to establish the extent and causes of disproportionality in child protection interventions for minority ethnic and faith communities. The project will engage with minority ethnic and faith communities, and foster extended family and community, as well as immediate family, involvement. Learning from these strands of activity will inform the work of the LSCB and partners through the three-year business plan and partners' own workplans; and also inform training.
- LB Merton is also working in partnership with their children and young people to gather information from their peers about the safety & wellbeing issues which are important to them; to identify any differences related to the culture & faith of the respondents and to make recommendations to address them. The Merton children and young people will then present the project - with the launch of the overall Project outputs - at the London Safeguarding Children Board conference (November 2011).
- 5.9 **LB Newham** – the Newham project is seeking to pilot a community and multi-agency/faith education programme to raise understanding and awareness of child sexual abuse and sexual exploitation. The project is seeking to dispel beliefs that equate sexual abuse with 'possession' and promote appropriate help-seeking both to prevent and treat this and other abuse and neglect.
- 5.10 **LB Sutton** – the Sutton project seeks to map local faith and community groups (and supplementary schools) and identify/make contact with those that are not linked in with advice and training from the local voluntary sector umbrella organisation. The project will assist the groups to establish/improve and share child protection good practice, assist them to keep up to date in terms of policy, research and training and link them into the LSCB. It will also consider implementation of an accreditation scheme based on Safe Network Standards.

- 5.11 **LB Tower Hamlets** – the Tower Hamlets project is piloting the introduction of a multi-agency cultural competence training programme for professionals. The programme recognises the need for professionals providing services to children and families to be able to relate appropriately to people from a range of different cultures and faiths. This is important because the mix of minority communities and faith groups living in a local area can change relatively quickly due to the high levels of mobility in London.
- 5.12 **The third sector agencies** commissioned to provide specialist input for the boroughs on some of these projects include AFRUCA, the Victoria Climbié Foundation and the Churches Child Protection Advisory Service (CCPAS). CommUNITY Barnet (CVS) will provide voluntary sector expertise.

6. Linked project

- 6.1 **Safe Network Pilot Project** (Children England and NSPCC) – this project reported earlier this year. It worked with a number of London boroughs/LSCBs (Camden, Hackney, Haringey, Islington, Tower Hamlets and others) to engage with the faith groups within the borough area to develop an understanding of how they access statutory service support, what format that support takes; and if they do not link with local statutory services, what the barriers to doing so are. The second phase of the Safe Network project matched Safe Network resources to areas of difficulty, collated good practice case studies, facilitated interviews and focus groups, and developed recommendations on communications, dissemination of materials and bridging gaps)
 - * Safe Network is a jointly managed NSPCC and Children England team providing tailored safeguarding support for the third sector.

7. Project outputs launch

- 7.1 London Project's final Report, Guidance, Strategy Toolkit and Training Toolkit will be launched at the London Safeguarding Children Board conference on 30th November 2011.