

The Changing Face of Safeguarding



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This year has again seen a wide variety of reports and case reviews published both in the UK and internationally all identifying the missed opportunities to keep children safe and therefore putting them at risk of abuse or neglect. The children's commissioner (UK) issued a recent report (July 2017) stating that there are currently about 11 million children in the UK and of those approximately 36% (c4 million) are vulnerable. I would however argue that in our technology led world that all 11 million are vulnerable, as 95% of children now have home access to the internet and a third of 3-4 year olds regularly use it. Do we as adults really know how to keep them safe? Do we as adults put this high enough on our agenda in our ever-demanding world? Do we allocate enough time to ensuring that our children are taught how to take responsibility for keeping themselves safe? Do adults educate themselves to be able to educate the children?

What is "known"

Children are kept safe or put at risk through the action of other adults or children, but in over 90% of all child protection cases the perpetrator is a person that is known to the child, and this in today's world is where the first of the difficulties arises. Is our definition of "known" a 21st century definition, or one based on our own personal 20th century experience? How many children have a 'friend' or follow a person or celebrity that they don't physically know, but are making themselves known to, this changes significantly the concept of "known". Just today in the news another case has gone to court where a 46-year-old male pretended to be a 14 year old boy. Friends made online may not be who they say they are and this becomes an increasing difficult concept for young children to understand. Have we as parents, carers and educators moved enough away from the notion of stranger danger to fully understand how to support our children to keep themselves safe. Children need to share in the responsibility to keep themselves safe as we are no longer simultaneously viewing the same material they are. And what about the providers? What is their responsibility? There was a significant time lapse between snap chat launching snap map and it hitting the news alerting parents and schools to the feature that had undoubtedly already allowed many children to be tracked and a picture built up of their daily movements. The digital economy act 2017 will lead to a code of practice for social media providers and their need to respond to in appropriate use of their services, but what about the here and now.

Keeping pace

The landscape around safeguarding and child protection continually evolves as does the legislation and policy. We have seen this week the publication of new legal guidance to ensure that prosecutors treat online hate crimes with the same severity as they would those committed face to face. The terms grooming and child sexual exploitation although not new in practice become prevalent in UK legislation and policy from 2009. Peer on Peer abuse although not new has had its priority increased through the high-profile cases that have been reported with fatal consequences. In the NSPCC's child bullying report 2016 Cyber bullying was at the top of all the concerns of parents, however in reality still accounts for significantly less instances of bullying than face to face bullying, the biggest difference however is that young people can't leave it at the door. The reason often given for not reporting this early is the fear of the removal of their technology and therefore feeling punished. Group chat has become an increasing popular medium with many young people running several simultaneously thus creating another route to exposing children to the emotional vulnerability of feeling left out, and creating an unmet need.

Irrespective of your own technical skills; with neologisms like "sexting" appearing with increasing frequency it is impossible for most adults to keep pace with their children, creating an added area of concern for parents that they are far from familiar with. Children need support and guidance in how to remain positive with their online presence and how to keep themselves safe. Do we really allocate the correct

proportion of curriculum time to educating our parents and children in how to do this in our digital age. How many of our stake holders know the law about sexting? How many young people know that by receiving an indecent image of another young person they are committing a sexual offence, that could potential place them at risk of prosecution. It takes a matter of minutes for an embarrassing moment to be shared round a school but these minutes can affect the life of a vulnerable young person.

Changing behaviours and habits

Children and young people love technology and Ofcom commissioned a three year tracking report from 2013 to 2015 that looked at the change in use and behaviour of young people in relation to their media habits. It was clear that younger children see the internet as a form of entertainment, however as they grow older the social possibilities become key and the opportunities to build social capital are presented. Children in the 12-16 age group are possibly the most vulnerable; as they are in the transition from being a dependent child to being an independent adult. This progression is not linear and during this time the increased vulnerability is heightened by their exposure to change, change in school, change in family make up, change in friendship groups, change in support network and their own emerging sexuality. All young people are emotionally vulnerable by the nature of their place in this transitional phase. This vulnerability often highlights the key issue with any safeguarding situation exposing an unmet need. The report identified that Live streaming is

highly appealing to children and young people as it presents the chance for them to be a creator, a presenter and to be seen by a potentially huge audience. Most young people are comfortable communicating and sharing online so it is understandable that they may use the internet to explore sex and relationships. This may be natural but there are some very real risks.

What next?

1. Educate our children and young people, allocate a wider proportion of the curriculum time to exploring the impact and use of digital platforms.
2. Educate our parents, provide a real parenting in the digital world programme.
3. Educate our teachers, provide time for quality CPD focused on this need, not just ticking the safeguarding box of the annual update.



Karen Bell
Safeguarding Consultant
Veema Education

References:

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NSPCC (2017) 'Sexual abuse: Facts and statistics', <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-abuse-and-neglect/child-sexual-abuse/sexual-abuse-facts-statistics/> [Accessed: 18 August 2017]

Office for National Statistics (2017) 'Statistical bulletin: Internet access – households and individuals 2017', <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/householdcharacteristics/homeinternetandsocialmediausage/bulletins/internetaccesshouseholdsandindividuals/2017>, [Accessed: 20 August 2017]

Childrens Commissioner (2017) 'Vulnerability', <https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/CCO-On-vulnerability-Overveiw-2.pdf>, [Accessed: 17 August 2017]

BBC News, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news>, [Accessed 21 August 2017]

NSPCC (2017) 'How safe are our children?' - <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/services-and-resources/research-and-resources/2017/how-safe-are-our-children-2017>, [Accessed 18 August 2017]

To discuss anything covered in this paper or for any other queries, please call us on **+44 (0)20 3637 4232** or email info@veema.co.uk.

Food For Thought



Related Veema Training Programme:

Whole-School Protection: Safeguarding children in education

Those working with children must receive basic child protection training at least once a year as a statutory requirement under S175/S157 of the Education Act 2002. Safeguarding Children in Education ensures they gain a fuller awareness and understanding of the crucial role they have in child protection.

<https://www.veema.co.uk/services/teacher-CPD;sid=WholeSchoolProtection>

Safer Recruitment: Protecting your school from unsuitable staff

Safe recruitment practices are essential for any educational establishment looking to protect the children in its care. All involved in recruitment must ensure they reflect this in their selection of a new employee. This one-day course ensures they are equipped to do so.

Delivered by an accredited trainer, Safer Recruitment covers all aspects of recruitment and child protection, helping ensure your school meets its responsibilities to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

<https://www.veema.co.uk/services/teacher-CPD;sid=SaferRecruitment>

Leading Safely: Child protection training for designated safeguarding leads

Designated safeguarding leads contribute greatly to the 'child protection ethos' of their school. From point of concern through to referral and assessment, Safeguarding and Child Protection Training for Designated Safeguarding Leads provides them with a much greater understanding of child protection processes and the legislative duties of all staff. Using case studies and serious case reviews, participants learn how to apply effective professional practice including managing confidentiality, information sharing, recording, whistleblowing, professional boundaries and managing professional disagreement.

<https://www.veema.co.uk/services/teacher-CPD;sid=LeadingSafely>

Additional Reading:



How Safe Are Our Children?

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/services-and-resources/research-and-resources/2017/how-safe-are-our-children-2017>
NSPCC (2017)



Online Abuse:

Facts and statistics
<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-abuse-and-neglect/online-abuse/facts-statistics>
NSPCC (2017)

Why choose a Veema CPD Programme?

- Tailor-made to provide the tools you need for long-term professional development.
- Incorporates the new standards for teacher professional development (Department of Education, July 2016).
- Improves practice while remaining focused on pupil outcomes.
- Provides an effective framework for revising practice and evaluating the impact.

Our in-house teacher training programmes run for either a full day or can be broken down into multiple on-going CPD training to as many staff as required.

Research demonstrates that the impact of professional development is most effective when a school implements an on-going programme. So our bespoke training packages:

- allow time to put into practice the newly acquired skills, with a set deadline — a strong incentive to implement what has been learnt.
- reflect on what you have learnt, evaluate what has been achieved and embed as best practice.
- maximise the gains from any in-house CPD offered in school with clear measurable outcomes.

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