

Webinar with Young Scrutineers

January 31st, 2024

Notes

The webinar was attended by 11 young people from 7 LSCPs representing 3 geographic areas: Yorkshire, Southwest, and Greater London. The participants had various levels of experience and provided diverse perspectives as their involvement with LSCPs varied as users of the services, young scrutineers and advisors employed by the LSCPs, lived experiences working alongside young people suffering trauma and marginalisation and working from the Health and Education sectors.

1. What are LSCPs to you? / What does the term LSCP mean to you? (Local Safeguarding Children Partnerships: LSCPs)

- Some participants explained what an LSCP represented to them:
 - Partner organisations at local areas that promote the safety of young people.
 - The use of different strategies and funding according to the local context.
 - Shared legal obligation to take care of children.
- Participants expressed varied perspectives on LSCP work and emphasised their involvement in the different sectors:
 - Health- working with NHS to identify signs of mistreatment or hazardous situations.
 - Education- working with schools to understand YP's perspectives and needs and assess the problems.
 - Systemic level- strategic analysis and policy design.
- Participants discussed how practitioners in safeguarding underestimate the young people they serve:
 - Young people are not listened to or taken seriously when they are the experts on their own situations.
 - The safeguarding practices are well stated for children and adults but do not accommodate young people.
 - Young people should be reached in places where they feel comfortable and relaxed such as youth clubs
 - Practitioners should consider that children who have experienced safeguarding incidents can be more mature because of their experiences: they have had to grow up. There is an inbuilt assumption about children in care that they don't understand or are trying to cause trouble. The stigma about children who have received negative things is that they don't understand. But they might understand it really

well from their position: they understand their position better than adult professionals because they are experiencing it. They are the expert of the impact on them.

- Participants highlighted how children and young people should be helped to understand their rights for better safeguarding practices.
- It was discussed how peer groups might increase the strengths of youth voices and provide a safe environment for them to express their perspectives.

2. How do you think LSCPs should involve young people in their work? How well are they doing it?

- Participants discussed various aspects of the participation of YP as LSCP members (advisors/scrutineers/etc):
 - Participants shared a consensus on the importance of continuous involvement of young people in safeguarding efforts.
 - The involvement of YP in safeguarding work should incorporate training and being able to immerse themselves slowly in the work. This includes learning about the language, jargon and acronyms so that they are not left out of conversations. Ambassadors or representatives could oversee the YP to make sure their questions are answered and to work as advocates between the YP and the adult team.
 - Young people might consider young scrutineers/advisors as friends. This might help them to then go back to leadership to discuss their findings and incorporate these views into the practice.
 - They discussed how YP can also work as auditors whose work directly informs the leadership team. However, it is very important that these views are really considered even when negative or contrary to the “adults’ perspectives”.
 - YP should work on influencing policies and practice, for example, making sure that communications contain accessible language that is not patronising.
 - YP should have a voice at all levels, locally and nationally.
- Participants also referenced the importance of involving YP as the subject of safeguarding:
 - They suggested improving communication and dispelling misconceptions through increased advertisement to young people.
 - They discussed how schools and social media could play a role in reaching and engaging with the younger demographic. Also, the PHSE curriculum could incorporate lessons regarding the safeguarding processes and rights.

- They recognized the peer element. Young people in need of care might feel more comfortable discussing issues with people closer to their age.
- The participant discussed how YP could be sitting at the table when decisions are being made for their own cases. YP should not lose control of their cases, better transparency and communication could be employed.
- They discussed the importance of maintaining trust and informing them about the process instead of going straight to parents or keeping information from them.

3. Now talking about the general work of LSCPs, do you think from your work and other experiences that LSCPs are successful in keeping children safe)?

a. Why or why not?

- Participants find it challenging to definitively assess the success of LSCPs in safeguarding children. Challenges in evaluating LSCP effectiveness are acknowledged due to complex and dynamic factors. They discussed how statistics show a decent job, but children are still “falling through the gaps”. Participants specified that for them, a complete success would be reaching 100% of children and young people without suffering any incidents. However, they recognise how difficult that is at a national level.
- Participants referred to miscommunications and information transference problems as one of the main issues, especially among the different sectors involved.
- They recognized the critical nature of effective reporting in preventing tragic incidents.
- They also recognized the identification and assessment of thresholds as an area for improvement.
- The participants recognized that the work of YP within their LSCPs was effective in identifying YP’s needs, challenging approaches and providing a youth voice. The employment of YP makes the work of LSCPs more effective. The input of YP also allows LSCPs to get involved with children and YP using more appropriate language and attitudes.
- Rapid response to emergencies was an area identified as being effectively covered by LSCPs.
- Participants expressed how the work of LSCPs might be difficult to measure because other conflicts and contexts might also interfere with the outcomes such as county lines and borough issues.
- Participants mentioned that the approach LSCPs take has become more collaborative and mature.
- They expressed some concerns that more interest is put on serious life-threatening issues, but there is not enough attention to “lesser” problems such as bullying.

- The communication was again referred as a problem, this time specifically between the local authorities and the Education sector.
- Also, they referred the need for better communication and promotion about safeguarding to YP and children.
- Some participants stated that LSCPs are not effective in keeping children safe, but they could be by being more transparent and honest with their results, they should stop being defensive.
- The LSCPs could also be more effective if YP and children understood what safeguarding encompasses and the risks involved.

4. How do you think that the success of an LSCP should be measured?

- Participants discussed the difficulty in definitively assessing the success of LSCPs in safeguarding children.
- Engagement with the public and the range of work done as ways to measure success.
- Different approaches to measuring success should be considered for various teams within the LSCP, given the distinct nature of their activities.
- Action taken as a result of research and reforming policies is seen as an indicator of success.
- Monitoring pledges made by stakeholders and holding them accountable for improvements.
- Importance of avoiding tokenistic engagement and ensuring meaningful involvement of young people.
- Advocacy for young people's inclusion in policy and strategy development from the beginning. Importance of young people being listened to and taken seriously in decision-making processes.
- Participants stress the importance of communication in multi-agency working for the effectiveness of LSCPs.
- Measures of effectiveness could include:
 - Overall pictures of the work and timescales
 - Compile all information and research into reports to assess how successful they have been.
 - Use of disproportionality data- comparing indicators against the national thresholds
- The effectiveness of LSCPs could be improved by:
 - Improving promotion of safeguarding in venues visited by YP such as GP surgeries, youth centres, CAMHS, etc. The promotion could incorporate fliers with information on what to do and how to proceed if you have a safeguarding concern. Also, more promotion in schools and colleges.
 - Sharing of power and direct participation of YP in decision-making.
 - Improving access to communication and closing the information loop.

HIGHLIGHTS

- **Diverse Perspectives on LSCPs' work**

Participants recognized LSCPs as a network of partner organizations promoting safety for young people. They emphasized the role of safeguarding and how different sectors including Health and Education collaborate to ensure the safety of children and young people. Participants also discussed how LSCPs could include within their work the promotion of children and young people's rights as well as the distribution of information to empower them and avoid hazardous situations.

- **Continuous Involvement of Young People in the work of LSCPs:**

Consensus among participants on the necessity of continuous involvement of young people in safeguarding efforts. Participants advocated for gradual involvement, training, and support for young advocates within LSCPs. They also stressed the importance of having young advocates that can be in direct contact with the children and young people whom they support, provide insights for decision-making and provide a young and closer perspective to the work. They emphasized the importance of avoiding tokenistic engagement and ensuring meaningful youth participation in all levels of decision-making.

- **Training for Youth Advocacy:**

The participants discussed the importance of adequate training for young advisors and scrutineers involved in safeguarding. They highlighted that language training should be incorporated as one of the first modules, including jargon-busting and a proper preparation of the work LSCPs undertake. Training was highlighted as essential for equipping young people with skills to effectively advocate within LSCPs. Furthermore, the participants believe it is also necessary that young people involved with LSCPs have their own advocate or representative than can act as liaison between them and the LSCP's team. This representative could be a point of contact for questions, training, but also a link that advocates for their views to be actually considered by the adults.

- **Involvement of Young People as subjects of LSCPs' work:**

The young people and children that are being served by the LSCP should also be involved through transparent processes and shared decision-making. The participants argued that the children and young people in need of safeguarding are the experts on their own situation. Participants stressed the importance of creating a safe space for youth voices to be heard and considered in decisions.

- **Effectiveness of LSCPs in Safeguarding:**

The participants acknowledged challenges in definitively assessing LSCP success due to dynamic factors and the complexity of local contexts. However, some reported that they consider the work of LSCPs to be effective but not perfect. Miscommunications and information transfer problems were identified as significant challenges within LSCPs. Moreover, they recognized the effective role of young people in identifying needs, challenging approaches, and providing a valuable youth voice, which can significantly increase the effectiveness of the partnerships. Rapid response and collaboration were highlighted as strengths, but concerns were raised about attention to "lesser" problems like bullying.

- **Metrics for Measuring LSCP Success:**

Participants discussed the difficulty in measuring success, suggesting metrics such as engagement, action resulting from research, and public involvement. They called for holding stakeholders accountable and monitoring pledges made by LSCPs to ensure tangible improvements.

- **Transparency and Communication:**

Transparency and communication were the main topics raised regarding LSCPs' ineffective practices. They raised concerns about how miscommunications, particularly between the sectors involved, diminishes the ability to protect children and young people and avoid serious consequences. A lack of communication and transparency was also raised as an issue impacting the trust children and young people have in system and their ability to be part of the decision-making process.