

The Bulletin

Issue 24

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Information for everyone working with children and young people in Devon



Welcome to the latest edition of **The Bulletin**.

Children's Trusts are changing up and down the country, following the case of Baby P and new statutory guidance. Safeguarding is paramount in the minds of people who work with children and young people. In this edition we interview Alan Wooderson – the new independent chair of Devon's Local Safeguarding Board.

The role of everyone who works with children and families is as crucial as ever in improving the lives of Devon's children.

Much good work is already being done across the Children's Trust partnership and children and families across the county are benefiting from the work we are doing.

We recognise and value the work being done across all agencies. I recently attended

the Children in Care awards - an event where young people being helped by all these agencies were honoured for some quite remarkable achievements. It was a truly memorable evening, and I was really heartened to meet these young people and hear about some of the incredible things they have done – often after very difficult and turbulent beginnings.

The View From Here in this issue is from a 15-year old girl living in Devon, who gives a full and frank view of the issues she faces being gay. She frequently comes into contact with homophobia, abuse and discrimination from her peers, her friends and even professionals.

It is a shocking account, which brings into sharp focus the reality of being a young person growing up with a perceived difference. It shows us that despite the many policies and

awareness-raising initiatives going on across Devon, we all need to be aware of these issues, be attuned to the issues young people face and above all, listen to the young people with whom we have contact.

This edition also features an article on the Silent night in Barnstaple Square event held in North Devon, which I attended. Around 250 children and young people attended the event to raise awareness about domestic violence. The comments raised by the young people struck a real cord with me, and I feel this event, and others like it, provide a lifeline to children who might be in that situation, while raising awareness with the whole school community.

Feedback on **this bulletin** is welcome as always, please send your comments to Louise Raymond at louise.raymond@devon.gov.uk

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The Devon Children's Trust is a partnership between social care, education, health, community, voluntary, and justice services working together to make a difference for Devon's children and young people.

The view from here... Growing up gay

I'm 15 years old and I attend a school in Devon.

I hope to give you a plain and realistic view of the issues I face in and out of school.

When I think of the many instances where I have been singled out, disrespected and discriminated against

purely because of my sexual orientation it makes me feel very sad and concerned. Especially about the fact that it isn't just young people that do this, but adults as well. Last year three members of my class chose to give me a lot of verbal abuse so I reported it to my teacher. What she replied was shocking "She is not gay, would never be gay, that's a ridiculous accusation, don't insult her like that again!" After this nothing more was said.

Many people think that homophobia is no longer an issue that needs tackling, it is merely the norm or doesn't exist. I fear that many of the young LGBT population will grow up having to try and accept that it is the norm to be ridiculed for their sexual orientation. When I came out I thought I was prepared for any abuse thrown at me, I was wrong. I used to believe I was a strong person and could stand up to any amount of insults, but I wasn't prepared for the immense amount of abuse I received, much of this is still going on. I should imagine that every young LGBT person today will have suffered some abuse similar to mine; maybe less, maybe more.

I'm often asked; Is your gayness genetically inherited or is it contagious? Did you wake up gay one day? Did you get that ear piecing to prove you are gay? Are you gay because you can't pull

lads? Wouldn't you rather be normal and be straight, it would help people feel less obliged to bully you? Do you get to claim disability benefits for being gay? These questions often come from young people I don't know.

When I'm older I wouldn't dare walk down the street holding my girlfriend's hand for fear of what consequences may arise. I do not wish to tar everyone with the same brush, because there are great and fair people in the world.

This problem is so bad that I find that a boy has to be homophobic to prove he is straight. If a straight individual hasn't dated within the past few years they are automatically gay also.

In most schools it is said that homophobic behaviour should be treated as equal to racism. However, there is no evidence that those words have ever been put into action, I asked about this issue and was promised that during anti-bullying week progress would be made. Nothing happened. Everyone knows that racism and homophobic behaviour should be treated as equal problems and crimes. If I was to abbreviate the word Pakistani I could face exclusion.

Last week a student was called a gay faggot because he was unable to complete his IT coursework, the teacher's response was to laugh.

When I originally came out at school I was told by a close group of friends that, our friendships wouldn't be changed. The reality was different. My best friend declared we were still friends, but treated my sexual orientation like a taboo subject. This was the same with many of my peers; they have chosen to be friends from a distance and refuse to acknowledge my sexual orientation as normal, or how I was born. Most tend to think my sexual orientation is a phase I will overcome or a problem I will solve.

I want you to think about why I have spent three years of secondary school suffering discrimination, abuse and mockery. Nobody can give my situation any real justification. Many people speculate about what levels of homophobia are really happening, but I know for sure, because I am the one it is happening to. I hope this has opened your eyes to what goes on in the lives of today's young LGBT population. **Now is the time to raise awareness and make people more informed.**



Joining up services to help young people

Young people and their parents and carers will be notified this week of a new proposal between two services in Devon who are working together to improve data security by reducing the current need to hold the same information on multiple databases.

A single piece of software will be shared between **Connexions Cornwall and Devon** and **Devon Youth Service** allowing authorised employees from both services access to basic personal details on Devon's young people. Through the operation of a single system it is forecast that significant savings will be made in both organisations.

Connexions Cornwall and Devon, holds a database of young people which is

populated with information supplied, under the *Learning & Skills Act 2000*, by schools and the local authority. Parents have an 'opt out' option if they do not want their children's details held on the database.

John Davey, Director of Service Delivery for Connexions Cornwall and Devon said: "This is a good example of bureaucracy being reduced and services sharing a single piece of software. We will not be making any confidential details available, but will be sharing basic personal details which are supplied to us by Devon County Council. In this way we will be able to ensure that both services have the most up-to-date contact details and the need to hold records in lots of different places will be reduced."

In future Devon Youth Service will take advantage of Connexions Cornwall and Devon's database to record their work with young people.

Dillon Hughes, Strategic Lead for Youth Services in Devon said, "This is a significant step forward and takes us much closer towards integrated working, and reduces the level of bureaucracy surrounding young people's databases" In line with Data Protection requirements, Connexions Cornwall and Devon have written to those who will be affected.



Narrowing the Gap Final Year One Guidance

The Narrowing the Gap Final Year One Guidance is now available on the C4EO website.

It updates initial guidance which was published in January 2008. It aims to answer in simple terms this question, "what is it that, if applied universally and pursued relentlessly, would make the most significant differences to the outcomes for vulnerable groups of children and young people?"

It primarily focuses on the critical 'building blocks' necessary for 'narrowing the gap' - drawn from literature, research and data evidence, along with the expert views of children's sector practitioners.

Find more information on Narrowing the Gap Final Year One Guidance at www.c4eo.org.uk/narrowingthegap/documentsandpublications.aspx If you are have problems downloading this document email contactus@c4eo.org.uk and we'll email it to you.

Somebody else's child

Devon's 'invisible' children at risk

Devon County Council (DCC) is urging people across Devon to help them protect vulnerable children living in private fostering arrangements.

The call is part of a national campaign called **Somebody Else's Child**, run by the British Association for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF), which aims to raise awareness of private fostering.

Children living with someone who isn't their parent or carer for more than four weeks are classed as being privately fostered. Many are unknown to DCC, meaning they are potentially open to abuse or neglect.

Although this is done by private arrangement, legally the parent and the carer must notify the local authority where the child is going to live so that the authority can make sure the child is being properly looked after. Nobody knows exactly how many children are privately fostered, but in 2001 the Department of Health estimated that there could be as many as 10,000 in

England and Wales. It is feared that some of these 'invisible' children could be at risk of abuse, or victims of trafficking.

Last year, there were 22 notifications of private fostering arrangements in Devon. However there is likely to be many times this number in the county. DCC is particularly asking people who work with children to be aware of private fostering and contact them immediately if they suspect such an arrangement.

Private foster carers who do not notify Devon County Council may also be missing out on important information and support, such as financial advice about benefits to which they may be entitled.

Councillor John Smith, Executive Member for Children and Young People's Services, said: "Everybody has a role in keeping our children safe - whether you are a teacher, youth worker, neighbour or just chat to the other

parents at the school gate. If you hear about a child who is being privately fostered please let us know immediately so we can ensure the child is being kept safe.

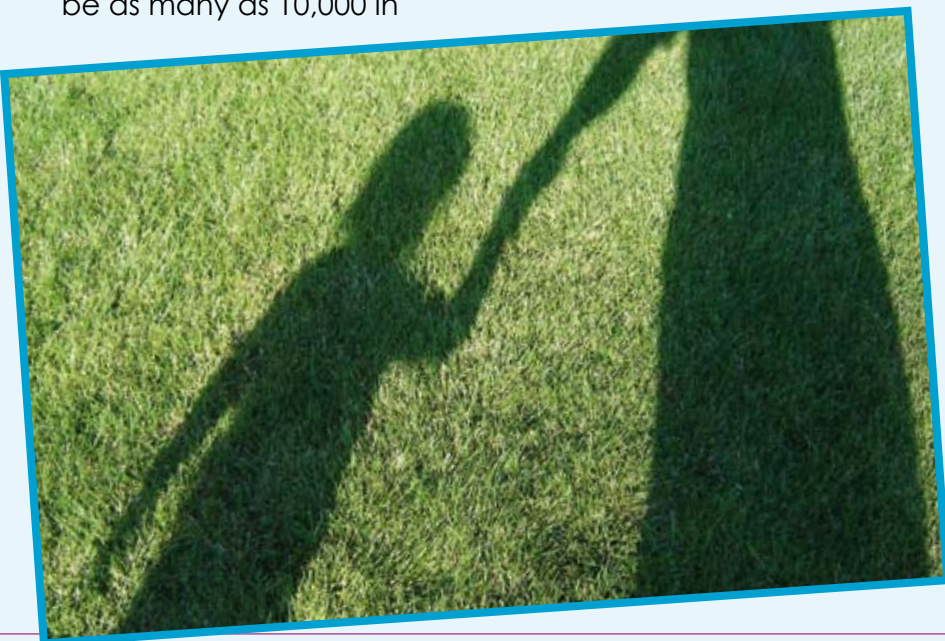
"Our message is simple: If you think you might be privately fostering, get in touch with us now - it is against the law not to do so and you may be entitled to benefits and support which the council can help identify.

"If your child is living with someone outside your immediate family, or you are in the process of arranging this, you should notify the council. And if you work with children and young people and think you may know a privately fostered child, talk to their carer, but if they are reluctant to tell us, please get in touch.

"If we do not know about these children, they remain hidden and we are unable to check that they are safe."

Once DCC knows about a private fostering agreement, a social worker will check the suitability of the arrangement and continue to make regular visits to make sure the child is safe and well cared for, as well as offering information and support to carers. DCC has the power to remove a child from a private foster care placement if it has concerns for the child's welfare.

To find out more about private fostering and how to notify Devon County Council of a private fostering arrangement, go to www.devon.gov.uk/privatefostering or call **0845 155 1013**.





second guide to...

information sharing

What is information sharing?

The sharing of personal information between agencies working together, to make sure that children and young people get the support they need.

What is personal information?

Any information capable of identifying a living individual. Examples are:

- Name
- Address
- Date of birth
- Contact telephone number
- Email Address
- CCTV footage
- Photos and video recordings
- Professional opinions

When can I share personal information?

If you can say **yes** to at least one of these statements:

- I have the person's **consent**
- I have a **legal obligation** or a **legal power**
- It is in the **public interest** to share the information
- Sharing the information is to protect a person's **vital interests** (matters of life or death or serious harm).

When can I share information without consent?

You can share information without consent if getting consent would:

- Put a child at increased risk of **significant harm**
- Put an adult at risk of **serious harm**

- Prejudice the **prevention or detection of a crime**
- **Delay making enquiries** about allegations of significant harm.

Keeping children and young people involved.

It is important that children and young people know how we will use and share their information. Make sure that:

- They **understand** who their information may be shared with
- **Why** we may need to share information and **with whom**
- They are made aware of the **choices** that they have about the use of their information
- Any **queries** they may have are answered.

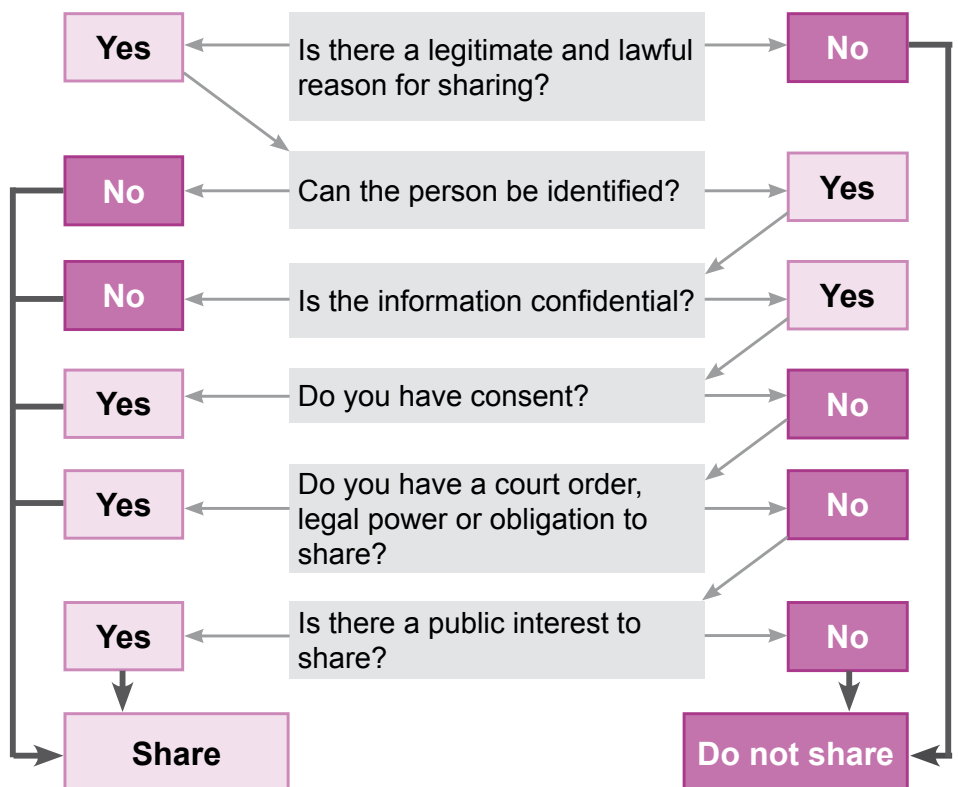
How do I share information properly?

- Share the **minimum** amount of information necessary (and where possible anonymise)
- Make sure the person you are sharing with is **entitled** to receive the information
- Check the information is **accurate** and **up to date**
- Make sure the recipient understands the limits of any **consent**
- **Record the reasons** for your disclosure or non-disclosure.

Where can I find out more?

Contact the project team at childrens.trust@devon.gov.uk

Information sharing decision flowchart





Children and young people have a right to feel safe in their home

In North Devon partners worked together during Domestic Violence Awareness Week 2008 to create a successful event to help raise awareness that 'everyone has the right to feel safe in their home'. The partners were three local primary schools, the Youth Inclusion Support Programme (YISP), the Children's Activity Support Programme (CASP), North Devon's Women's Aid (NDWA) and North Devon College

In the week leading up to Awareness Week interactive workshops planned by YISP, NDWA were presented to pupils in year 5 and 6. In the workshops, young people shared their

thoughts and views of what it is to feel safe. They were also given information about how to seek help if they need to.

During Awareness Week they joined students from North Devon College and members of organisations working in North Devon in an awareness raising event in Barnstaple town centre. At this event two hundred and fifty children and young people walked to the town square some bringing along banners they had made with their teachers. In the square there was a presentation by Mary Nisbett and music by Jim Jones and Jenna, two local singer songwriters who prepared a special version of the carol *Silent Night* which everyone joined in to sing.

After Awareness Week the schools were re-visited to thank the young people who got involved and to evaluate all the events.

The children told us:

"I liked the way you had the opportunity to say your own opinions."

"I learned a lot, you got the message out too!"

"I liked all of it, the music and the speech and how much people care."

Many of the children would like the event to happen again and had many excellent ideas about what could make it even better next time.

AXS training: latest update

Integrated working managing the practice AXS02

This one day course is primarily targeting operational managers, aiming to help develop a deeper understanding and knowledge of the complexities and challenges of integrated working and how their roles will influence effective practice.

Dates and venues for until March 2009

- **12 February 2009**
Broomhill Art Hotel, Barnstaple
- **16 March 2009**
Main Conference Room, Coaver Club, Exeter
- **30 March 2009**
Buckfast Abbey, Buckfastleigh

Using integrated working tools AXS03

The aim of this two day course is to promote the use of integrated working tools and processes. The course will allow for the development of practical skills and confidence in applying; CAF, team around the child meetings and the role of the lead professional.

Dates and venues for until March 2009

- **5 and 6 March 2009**
Main Conference Room, Coaver Club, Exeter
- **11 and 12 March 2009**
Passage House Hotel, Kingsteignton
- **17 and 18 March 2009**
Main Conference Room, Coaver Club, Exeter
- **19 and 20 March 2009**
Broomhill Art Hotel, Barnstaple
- **26 and 27 March 2009**
Newton Abbot Racecourse, Newton Abbot

To register use the online booking system at www.devon.gov.uk/onlinebookings Make sure that you have authorisation from your line manager.

For more information contact 01392 382596 or email hrtahelp@devon.gov.uk



5 minute staff interview



Name: Alan Wooderson

Job title: Independent Chair,
Devon Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB)

What's new for Devon's LSCB?

Well the newest thing is that I am the new chair. This is the first time the Devon LSCB has had an independent chair. It follows examples of good practice from elsewhere of having a chair who can provide external challenge and scrutiny of the safeguarding systems, reduce any scope for conflicts of interest and be a credible independent 'voice' for the LSCB.

How will having an independent chair be beneficial?

Many people assume that safeguarding is the sole responsibility of the local authority, when it is the responsibility of all of us. Many agencies and services have a statutory duty to co-operate. I want to make sure this is reiterated and that Devon LSCB's independent voice drives changes across all agencies to prioritise children and young people 'staying safe'. The LSCB is an overarching board co-ordinating all the safeguarding work, monitoring its effectiveness and delivering improvements. Being independent allows me to ensure all partners deliver their contribution to the highest standards.

Safeguarding has had a very high profile recently with the case of Baby P and cases in Doncaster and Birmingham. How can we make sure that doesn't happen here?

We all have a responsibility to make sure all children are safeguarded and their welfare protected and promoted. With recent events the media is going to highlight any failures in this. By working together, ensuring critical information is shared, responding quickly in assessing risks and by having robust policies and procedures in place across all agencies we have a strong foundation. It is also vital that staff are well trained and most importantly are given active support in dealing with the most difficult and challenging of situations.

What has happened to Devon's LSCB since the Baby P case?

All LSCB members have been involved in reviewing aspects of their safeguarding accountabilities. An immediate stock take of all child protection plans has already been undertaken by CYPs and a multi-agency audit. Also there has been considerable investment by the County Council into the children's workforce and into supporting the work of the LSCB.

Nationally, Lord Laming has been asked to look into how effective children's safeguarding has become following up on his original enquiry into the death of Victoria Climbié. He is due to report in February. This coupled with work across all aspects of child protection in the next few months will have significant impact on our work.

What are you working on at the moment?

In addition to the above, since I became chair I have been working on improving the structure of the LSCB and making the sub-committees deliver their accountabilities so that our Business Plan makes real changes to the lives of children and young people.

I am determined that the LSCB has a strong and independent voice so there will be some press work about projects and schemes that have been successful. We will be producing an annual report that details achievements and barriers to improvement that need to be overcome. We are also having to make sure that all our safeguarding work reaches the standards laid down by Ofsted.

Work to improve the LSCB website is currently underway. It is not as useful and easy to navigate as it should be and needs a comprehensive redesign, so that it is a useful source of information as well as professional guidance

Can I go to the website for more information?

You can, although it is work in progress www.devon.gov.uk/devonlscboard It has all the minutes to the meetings and the business plan which is updated regularly. There are big changes ahead for safeguarding as well as Devon's LSCB so watch this space.



The Sir Francis Chichester Trust is again offering free places on outward bound courses to young people who live in Devon and who are aged 16-24. The courses are held at the Outward Bound centres in the Lake District, Wales and Scotland and young people who are offered a place are able to choose the venue and dates to suit, subject to availability.

This is a wonderful opportunity for young people who wouldn't normally have a chance to do something like this. The courses are primarily personal development courses, based around outdoor activities with a particular emphasis on

Free outward bounds courses for young people

teamwork. The benefits are increased self-confidence and the development of life skills that remain with them throughout their lives. The courses are hard work and require real commitment from the young people.

Candidates are normally selected from those who have had very few opportunities for challenges of this nature in the past and the Trustees will look for some indication that the young people concerned will really benefit, enjoy the experience and learn from it! Outward Bound can't take young people who are, or will be at the time of their course, subject to any youth offending order.

If an applicant is successful they will be responsible for their own transport arrangements to the centre, but the entire course fee is met by the Trust. If transport costs are a problem it will be looked at sympathetically and help may be forthcoming.

The closing date for the main allocation of places for courses this summer is Monday 30 March with interviews for those shortlisted being held 23 and 24 April.

An application form can be downloaded from the Trust website at www.chichestertrust.org.uk You can also get more information and links to the Outward Bound website. If you have any queries or need more information call Anthea Parkyn on **01392 250976**.

C4EO support programme on early years for Children's Trust partners

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The Centre for Excellence and Outcomes (C4EO) was established in 2008 by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) to provide the knowledge, data and tailored support agencies may need to meet the *Every Child Matters* challenges.

C4EO's first theme is Early Years covering:

- **narrowing the gap** in outcomes for young children through effective practices in the early years
- improving children's attainment through a better quality of **family-based support for early learning**
- improving development outcomes for children through effective practice in **integrating early years' services**.

C4EO have published **knowledge reviews** and **progress maps** on the first two priorities and

have arranged nine free regional workshops for representatives of local Children's Trusts.

More work is being done on the integrating early years' services priority, in the meantime C4EO have published a summary of information on this.

The **knowledge reviews** provide an analysis of the existing knowledge and evidence for each priority. The **progress maps** are interactive, online tools which allow you to compare your local data with national and regional data through a secure and confidential site.

C4EO are also providing **tailored support** to help Children's Trusts. To get support from sector specialists complete the online request form, call **07917 663785** or email sue.rowley@C4EO.org.uk. The type of support will be tailored to specific needs, but may include help with developing local improvement plans or developing a local progress map.

For more details visit www.C4EO.org.uk.