

# CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

31 January 2013



## Findings from the Early Years Safeguarding Audit 2012

This report is presented at the request of Councillor Nicky Williams following presentation at the PCSB on 7 December 2012, and also in direct response to Alderman Pauline Purnell's enquires about learning from the Serious Case Review (SCR) for Nursery Z.

The early years safeguarding audit was launched in November 2011. Previously there was a joint safeguarding and welfare audit, but these aspects have now been separated to give more detailed information about the safeguarding procedures in early years settings. It is an online tool based on the Early Years Foundation Stage, Section 175/157 of the Education Act 2002, Section 11 of the Children Act 2004, Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment in Education 2007 and Working Together 2010. The audit was circulated to 124 early years providers, including nurseries, pre-schools and children's centres. A 99% return rate was received.

As the first safeguarding audit specifically aimed at early years providers in Plymouth, the initial audit was designed to be comprehensive and detailed to allow a bench mark of practice to be established. This enables a view to be taken on the impact of support and safeguarding advice previously given and to identify next steps for the development of improved practice.

The audit was divided in to four sections:

- Governance, responsibilities and working together for safeguarding
- Child protection and safeguarding policies and procedures
- Child protection and safeguarding training
- Safer recruitment.

A data sheet was also included enabling both quantitative and qualitative information to be collected.

Providers completed their audit online and were required to answer 'yes', 'no' or 'partly' to a series of questions. Where a 'no' or 'partly' response was indicated, the provider was required to identify what action they would take to develop that area.

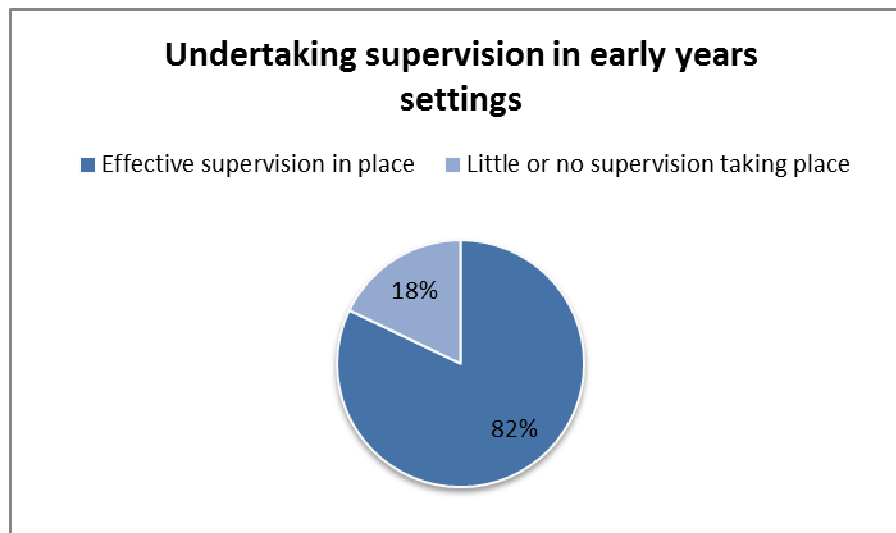
## Outcomes of the Audit and actions taken to develop practice:

### 1. Governance, responsibilities and working together for safeguarding

Early years providers were confident about their safeguarding responsibilities and 121 out of 123 providers identified that their organisation had an agreed over-arching written statement in place which reflected their ethos and commitment to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. One provider identified that there was no over-arching statement in place and the other confirmed that it was partly in place. Equally early years providers felt confident that there were

clear lines of accountability in place within their organisation. Responses indicated that 119 providers had a named person responsible for child protection and safeguarding at a senior level within their organisation.

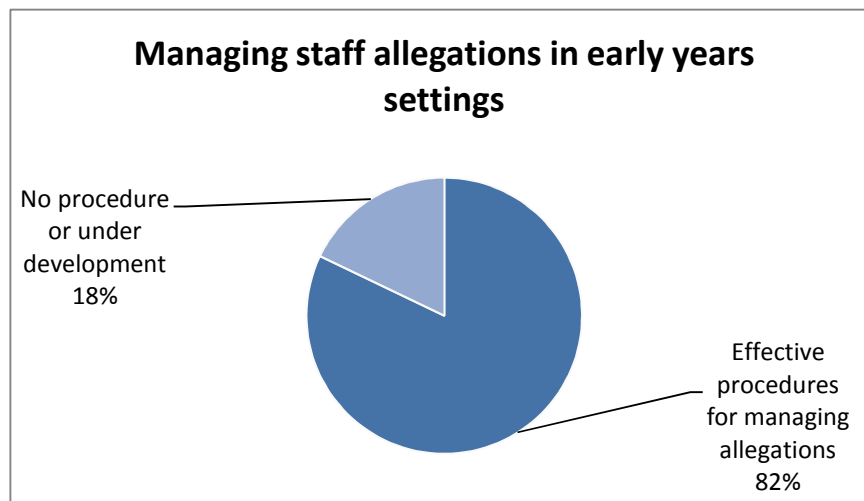
Providers were however less confident that they had effective supervision procedures, including supervision for child protection, in place, as shown in the diagram below. A total of 101 providers agreed that they undertook effective supervisions, however 20 identified they carried out no supervision, whilst the remaining two felt this was an area which was only partly addressed.



**Actions taken for development:** The revised Early Years Foundation Stage implemented in September 2012, now makes it a legal requirement for all early year providers to undertake regular supervision and appraisals. This requirement has been introduced by the government as a direct response to the recommendations made in the SCR of Nursery Z. Developing practice in this area has been a focus over the last six months, with providers signposted to the PSCB Supervision Skills for Child Protection Training. In addition, the Early Years Service has commissioned generic supervision training for all early years providers. This is being delivered by the Council's HR Service.

## **2. Child protection and safeguarding policies and procedures**

All early years providers reported they were confident that they had effective child protection and safeguarding policies and procedures in place. They were also confident that they had effective confidentiality and complaints policies in place. Early years providers were less confident in their procedures for managing allegations against staff members. Nine providers identified they had no procedure in place, and 13 felt their procedure was in need of development. The remaining 101 reported their procedure for managing allegations was good as shown in the following diagram.



**Actions taken to develop practice:** A section on managing allegations has been included in the safer recruitment training (see section 4) and the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) has produced information leaflets for early years settings on how to manage the allegation process from a setting and an individual perspective. One to one support is also given if required when attending allegation meetings.

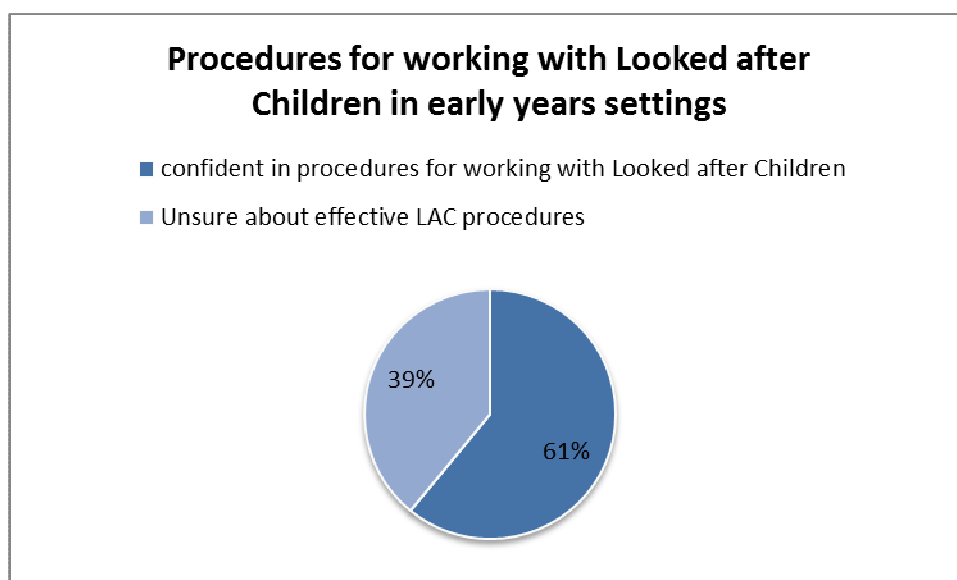
Responses indicated that 104 early years providers had an acceptable use policy in place, 11 felt that it was in development and two indicated that they had no acceptable use policy in place. The acceptable use policy would cover all aspects of technology use, including mobile phones and the internet. The large number of early years providers with acceptable use policies in place is significant, as there is no legal requirement for such. This aspect has been promoted and developed as good practice following the Serious Case Review for Nursery Z. The revised statutory Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework (2012) now requires all settings to have a policy regarding mobile phone use, which means that as a result of promoting effective practice the majority of settings already have this in place within their existing acceptable use policy.

**Actions taken to develop practice:** Good practice has been promoted through the now internationally recognised Online Safety Toolkit, which was developed in Plymouth following the SCR of Nursery Z. This has recently been updated by South West Grid for Learning (SWGfL) and purchased for all early years settings in Plymouth. Training to refresh practitioners' safeguarding knowledge and understanding through effective use of the toolkit is scheduled for spring 2013.

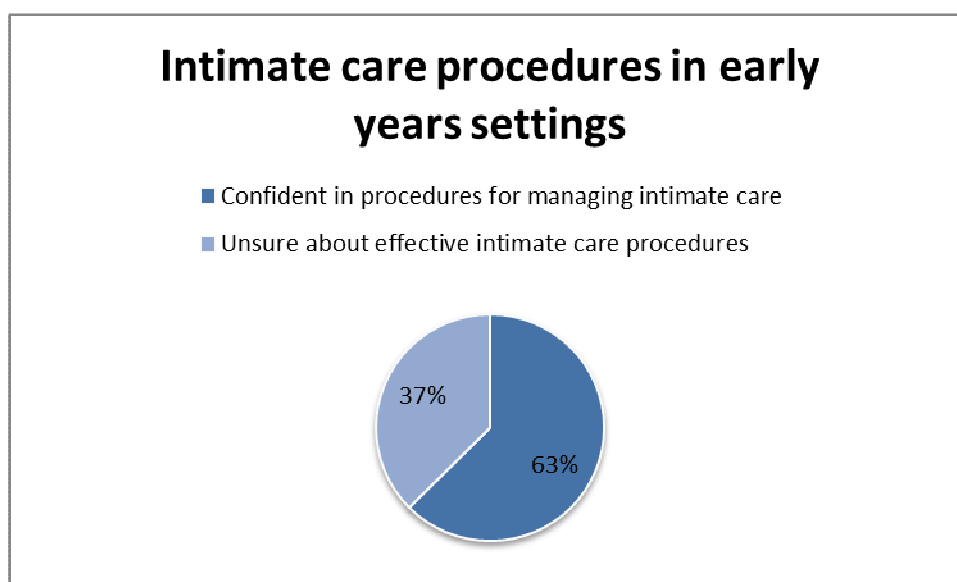
The audit identified two specific areas for development in terms of policy and procedure; although neither of the following areas are statutory requirements. Early years providers indicated that they lacked some confidence in their procedures for working with looked after children and managing intimate care.

For working with Looked after Children only 75 out of 123 providers stated that they had effective procedures in place, as shown in the chart below. It should be considered that many settings have not had a LAC attend their setting but are still keen to ensure effective procedures are in place.

**Actions taken to develop practice:** A LAC protocol has been developed between early years and social care, and the Education Consultant for LAC has attended a recent Early Years Leaders and Managers meeting to outline best practice principals and increase practitioners' confidence.



With regard to managing intimate care 77 out of 123 providers felt that they had effective procedures in place ( see diagram below) This means that 63% of setting are operating over and above the basic practice outlined in the statutory Ofsted and EYFS requirements. Good practice has been promoted through welfare visits and through safeguarding email alerts advising on best practice.



**Actions taken to develop practice:** A draft policy on managing intimate care has been developed and will be shared with settings for them to adopt if they are less confident in their current procedures. Procedures continue to be monitored frequently through safeguarding and welfare visits.

### 3. Child protection and safeguarding training

Early years providers were predictably most confident in this area. The levels of child protection training undertaken by early years providers is high and continues to grow. Attendance at PSCB training is good for both the Child Protection Foundation (CPF) training and the Child Protection Advanced training and this was confirmed by the audit. Approximately 75% of practitioners

progress from their CPF training to more specialised training, with Domestic Abuse and E-safety training being the most commonly accessed. Over 100 settings identified that they have attended CAF training.

Early years providers identified that they provide their own in-house training and have developed training around whistle-blowing, codes of conduct and induction procedures. Providers reported however that they did not always routinely access the South West Child Protection Procedures website or incorporate it into their internal training. The audit identified that 92 providers are familiar with the website, although 22 were not aware of it.

**Actions taken to develop practice:** Awareness of website information has been raised through email alerts to settings

#### **4. Safer recruitment**

Feedback on safer recruitment was consistent across the board, with approximately 100 out of 123 providers reporting that they were confident in all aspects of recruitment. There is some need for development to ensure providers are as confident in this area as other aspects of child protection and safeguarding. Approximately 80 providers have a senior member of staff who has attended safer recruitment training, which has been identified as an area for improvement and increased participation.

**Actions taken to develop practice:** The Early Years Service had already started specifically targeting this area for development in the last 12 months, by commissioning the Council's HR Service to provide support and guidance to early years providers. This has included recruitment support where required. Further training has been provided on safer recruitment in autumn 2012, with Early Years now able to take responsibility for delivering safer recruitment training themselves to the early years sector.

#### **Conclusion:**

Overall the safeguarding audit has identified that there is a very strong baseline for safeguarding practice in the early years. It has identified a number of key strengths together with some relatively minor areas for development. These areas for development are being managed in a number of ways including training, 1-1 support, guidance and onsite safeguarding audits to ensure that policy and procedures are reflective of practice. Most significantly, the safeguarding audit was based on good practice as well as legislative requirements. It was clear from the results that early years providers in Plymouth are working far beyond minimum requirements to ensure the safety and well-being of the children in their care.

Author: Jo Hall

Job Title: Senior Adviser Early Years

Department: Education, Learning and Family Support

Date: January 2013.