

Pupil Support Team



Department of
Education

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AN ROINN
Oideachais

MÁNNYSTRIE O
Lear

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24 June 2015

To: Chairs of Boards of Governors and Principals of all grant-aided schools

Dear Chair and Principal

PREVENTING CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

Further to the letter issued to you last year about key messages arising from the Alexis Jay report into Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) in Rotherham, I am writing to you in light of recommendations arising from the report of the independent inquiry, led by Kathleen Marshall, into CSE in the north of Ireland. This report can be viewed at:

http://rqia.org.uk/cms_resources/CSE%20Inquiry%20Report%20Final_for_Publication.pdf

A child/young person friendly version of the report in the form of animation is available at: <https://youtu.be/kGcn8wWVOuM>

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) was enjoined to the inquiry and its report '*Evaluation of Preventative Education*' is available at:

<http://www.etini.gov.uk/index/surveys-evaluations/surveys-evaluations-post-primary/surveys-evaluations-post-primary-2014/evaluation-of-preventative-education.pdf>.

I would draw your attention to Pages 150 and 151 of the Marshall report which identify the recommendations directly aimed at schools. You should now consider these recommendations and any actions that you could take to minimise pupils' risk of CSE. The Child Protection Support Service for Schools (CPSSS) within each region of the Education Authority (EA) can offer support and advice as required.

Although aimed specifically at schools, many of the recommendations will also be of interest to the youth service and the Education Authority is being asked to ensure dissemination of the key messages within youth service provision.

There are other comments throughout the body of the report that are also worthy of note. These include:

- Schools and other education settings can play a key role in raising awareness, preventing, identifying and reporting CSE.
- All young people are at risk of sexual exploitation through the use of communication technologies. 'Sexting' in schools has been described by one voluntary organisation as 'epidemic' and there are examples of children in primary schools sharing inappropriate images. Many children and young people are unaware that sexting is illegal and that they may be committing an offence by sharing an indecent image, even if it is their own.
- Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) young people do not feel that same sex relationships are addressed during sex education. These young people can look to the internet for information, potentially bringing them into contact with risky people and dangerous situations.
- Schools need to engage more with parents on work being done in schools in addressing CSE and the personal development curriculum so that they can help keep their children safe outside of school.

You will be aware that much is already being done and it is encouraging that the ETI Evaluation Report acknowledges that the policies put in place in recent years to protect and safeguard children are now well embedded across the education sector.

You may also be aware that useful information and advice are available from the 'Pupil and Parent' section of the DE website including links to other sites offering support and I would encourage you to make use of these links as appropriate. This section of the website is updated as new information becomes available. You may also be aware that the Safeguarding Board NI (SBNI) has been commissioned to develop an eSafety Strategy which will consider the issue of 'sexting'.

Other recommendations for education will be addressed through a range of actions. One important development will involve the Department itself in joint working with the Department of Health Social Services and Public Safety and the Department of Justice on the development of a regional strategy for tackling CSE. This will include a consultation process that will seek the views of key stakeholders including Boards of Governors, teachers, children and young people. Further details will be made available as they develop and we look forward to engaging further with you as we work together to protect our children and young people.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Angela Kane". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

ANGELA KANE

Head of Pupil Support Team

Copies of this letter to schools are also being issued to the following organisations:

- Education Authority
- Council for Catholic Maintained Schools
- NI Council for Integrated Education
- Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta
- Governing Bodies Association
- General Teaching Council
- Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment
- Youth Council for NI