

## Keeping Children Safe in Education 2022

### Response of the Confederation of School Trusts (CST)

#### A Introduction

- 1 The Confederation of School Trusts (CST) is the national organisation and sector body for academy and multi-academy trusts in England. We represent more than 60% of the sector (all academy schools) This places CST in a strong position to consider this issue from the viewpoint of the system's leaders in self-governing organisations. As the sector body for School Trusts, we have a legitimate interest in governance and the proprietor/ employer perspective.

#### B Strategic safeguarding – responses to Chapter 3

- 2 CST welcomes the opportunity to respond to this consultation. We want to reserve our responses to **strategic safeguarding** issues and have encouraged our members to respond to the detailed proposals in the consultation document.
- 3 Our comments relate specifically to the proposals in the revised draft of **Chapter 3** which sets out the responsibilities of governing boards and proprietors to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Our focus is on the entity of the School Trust rather than other school or educational structures.
- 4 While we do not object to the proposals set out in Chapter 3, we do not think these proposals address the specific circumstances of School Trusts. Part two of the document is entitled 'The Management of Safeguarding.' We would advocate for a much stronger, *strategic* approach to safeguarding. As it stands, KCSiE fails to address the strategic safeguarding issues in managing a group of schools in a single legal entity.
- 5 Specifically, we think the proposals on governor and trustee training are weak and insufficient. KCSiE conflates the proposition of maintained school governance with Trust governance. This conflation of governance propositions is evidence in other Department guidance, for example the Governance Handbook. This is a dangerous error and potentially harmful to safeguarding. The proposition of strategic safeguarding across a group of schools requires stronger articulation.
- 6 **In relation to question 10 of the consultation document, we recommend that the Department works with CST and its members to propose more precisely the content of strategic safeguarding training that is appropriate to trustees/ directors and the content that all those involved in the governance of a School Trust should know.**

- 7 In relation to the section on 'whole school and college approach to safeguarding,' our fundamental point is that this section (and the whole focus of KCSiE) fails to address strategic safeguarding and the governance of safeguarding in a group of schools in a single legal entity.
- 8 **With regard to questions 11 and 12, we recommend that the Department works with CST and its members to create an addendum that offers advice and guidance to trusts on strategic safeguarding, exemplifying ways in which some of the strongest Trusts work to structure their safeguarding arrangements.**
- 9 Turning to the section on designated safeguarding leads, we note that the underlying assumption in this section relates to safeguarding within a single school. We strongly support that safeguarding professionals have the appropriate status and authority to carry out the duties of the post and that it is essential that those responsible for governance recognise the key role the safeguarding professionals play in the day-to-day leadership of safeguarding. However, in the context of a School Trust, there are many safeguarding professionals whose work needs to be led and overseen in a strategic way.
- 10 **Regarding questions 15 and 16, we recommend that the Department work with CST and its members to identify best practice in the leadership of strategic safeguarding and the support, training management oversight and governance of safeguarding professionals working in School Trusts.**

## C General comments

- 11 As a general comment, we are concerned about variable local authority thresholds for safeguarding. At the moment, there are potentially 150 different thresholds for safeguarding that are dependent on local authorities. This is deeply problematic in terms of safeguarding practice and extremely difficult logistically for School Trusts working across local authority areas.
- 12 **We recommend that the Department works with the Association of Directors of Children's Services to tighten and bring greater consistency to safeguarding thresholds. CST would be very happy to contribute to this work.**
- 13 Section 4, part 3 of the draft guidance, paragraph 190 states that:

*Governing bodies and proprietors should ensure that those involved with the recruitment and employment of staff to work with children have received appropriate safer recruitment training, the substance of which should at a minimum cover the content of this part (Part three) of this guidance.*

This paragraph assumes that the same person or people manage all aspects of safer recruitment (as set out in Part 3), from advert to contract issue. That may be the case in a school; it is unlikely to be the case in a Trust.

The training expectation should take account of this approach, recognising that some aspects of recruitment will be managed centrally and some locally and that the people undertaking the various elements should be appropriately trained on those elements. Again, CST and its members can assist.

**D Conclusion**

- 14 CST is committed to working with the Department and with the sector to develop more sophisticated and evidence-led approach to strategic safeguarding across a group of schools working together in a single legal entity.
- 15 We hope that this is of value to your consultation, is willing to be further consulted and to assist in any way that we can.

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8<sup>th</sup> March 2022