

## **10,000 Volts Debriefing**

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# **Safeguarding In Education During The Covid19 Pandemic**

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**Virtual Debrief with 246 Educationalists  
Across the UK  
With Streaming Video Facilitation**

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## **Emerging Themes Report**

**24<sup>th</sup> June 2020  
10:00-11:00**

**Event Commissioned by  
Martin Baker QPM**



## **Safeguarding in Education During Covid-19: A 10kV Conversation**

### **Personal Note from Professor Crego M.B.E Director of the Hydra Foundation & author of this report**

This was a unique event, engaging with expert practitioners during a crisis. We asked counter-cultural questions such as, “What achievements are you proud of?” and “What is going well?” This is in stark contrast to traditional blame-seeking debriefs or Serious Case Reviews, Coroners’ courts or parliamentary select committees) that take place after an incident, or where significant harm has taken place. This is entirely consistent with the Munro Review (2011)<sup>1</sup> recommendations, seeking out best practice. The aim of running an event such as this, right in the middle of a crisis, was to ensure its findings will inform practitioners dealing with safeguarding, be used to direct strategic thinking and save lives and protect the vulnerable.

I have a long history of working in child protection, the creator of 10kv and Hydra methodologies and the Director of the Hydra Foundation. The following report presents interim findings of the session delivered on the 24<sup>th</sup> June 2020. Our Foundation provides the suite of Hydra simulation tools and methodologies, free to the UK Police and Fire Services.

We delivered the 10KV session to 246 practitioners remotely, simultaneously and across the UK using our new smartphone app built on existing 10kv methodologies and adapted for this crisis including with live video facilitation. We have not charged for the event or this analysis report.

We have been delivering MACIE multi-agency child protection exercises across the UK (and internationally) for over 20 years. More than 85 without-charge Hydra events have taken place with all agencies represented. The MACIE exercise was described in the Munro Review (2011) as a demonstration of good practice, enabling all agencies to learn together. During this journey we have met passionate, committed and expert practitioners who dedicate their lives to protecting the most vulnerable in our society. We have found this multi-agency child protection space to be consistently evolving, with wonderful good practice and innovation. There are however tensions, with deep-rooted perceptions (often outdated or wrong) leading to mistrust. We have witnessed a great deal of confusion or ignorance of the roles of partner agencies. On a positive note, however, we have seen a strong movement towards joint accountability and responsibility for child safety, with the introduction of multi-agency safeguarding hubs

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<sup>1</sup> Great Britain, Department for Education, and Eileen Munro, *A Child-Centred System*. (Norwich: TSO, 2011)

(MASH) and a much greater sharing of information and joint responsibilities for child protection.

This 10kV event was commissioned by Martin Baker QPM, CEO – One Team Logic, the makers of MyConcern® who managed the invitations to the event. MyConcern have been running free online seminars throughout the Covid crisis. That have been attended by over 1.650 safeguarding practitioners. Martin introduced the debriefing session through a recorded video piece setting out the scope of the event, detailed later in this report. The following agencies and/or roles: education, local authority, designated safeguarding leads (DSL) and professional sports clubs.

The 47,000+ words entered during the one-hour session provide an unassailable evidence-base directly from the participants' fingers. The participants invited to contribute, are at the very front end of safeguarding, working day to day to protect the most vulnerable. We salute and thank them for their dedication and passion. It has been a real privilege to carry out this debrief and write this report. These words are the voice of the practitioners, they have so much to tell us and they must not be ignored.

I will conclude with just one statement from the whole report

*One of the most stressful events of my career. Coordinating safeguarding for the entire school, every pupil, and supporting staff, has been very difficult. Feel like I'm doing that with little outside support from the main agencies (Social Services and police) has been isolating. The staff here have been amazing and that has made all the difference. Incredibly proud to work alongside all the people that I do. Every one of them has put our children first. I wish newspapers and media could see the dedication across the country on this. It makes me mad to see the anti-teacher sentiments for an easy hit.*



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## **Personal Note by Martin Baker QPM, CEO of One Team Logic, the makers of MyConcern®.**

I need to start with two quick confessions. Firstly, I am a former police officer with 38 years' experience in five UK police forces but I am slowly 'getting back to normal'. Secondly, I am involved in school governance and have been for the past 15 years or so. It was our shared experience of policing and education governance that caused myself and my former police colleague and friend, Mike Glanville to found a safeguarding company that is wholly focused on protecting the vulnerable from abuse, harm, and neglect. Our co-founder Darryl Morton (he's the intelligent tech guy) and the rest of our incredible 100-strong team do this by bringing together the very best technologies with world-class safeguarding expertise.

In terms of safeguarding in education the challenges have never been more complex, nor the legal duties on staff, governors and trustees in schools and colleges more stringent. Also, the range of safeguarding concerns now being handled by educationalists has grown exponentially to include issues such as child sexual exploitation, female genital mutilation, radicalisation, and online safety. In addition, there has also been a significant increase in the number of young people experiencing complex mental health issues, with self-harm a common problem.

This creates an enormous responsibility for schools and colleges in managing what can be extremely challenging and time-consuming issues. Add to this the risks created by Covid-19 and the social, cultural and financial impact of the disease; the differential effect of the disease on the health of black and minority ethnic communities; the fallout for the low paid, the unemployed and families already living in poverty; and the frightening challenges encountered by those managing Covid-19 and other health or social risks, and you probably have the most challenging safeguarding landscape in our lifetime. Add to this the overstretch of other public services, and the burden on safeguarding leads in education can become intolerable.

As soon as the Covid-19 lockdown was announced we were acutely aware of the safeguarding issues that were likely to arise and the difficulties that would be faced by educationalist and others involved in 'remote safeguarding'. As well as offering our software free of charge to all UK schools we introduced weekly online Covid-19 Safeguarding Support webinars that were open to anyone wanting to attend. Over the past four months members of our own Safeguarding Advisory Panel - which includes senior leaders from UK education - and members of our own safeguarding team, have debated key topics and shared emerging practice with approaching 2000 delegates. Primarily, those attending have been safeguarding leads in UK education but also colleagues from overseas international schools and a wide range of other sectors including sports and housing. The feedback from those webinars has been phenomenally positive and it was the quality of those sessions that led us to the realisation that a structured debriefing was necessary to capture the very many 'lessons

learned' for safeguarding in education during Covid-19, not least because the emergency is far from over.

Consequently, we asked Professor Jonathan Crego, Director of the Hydra Foundation, if he would consider running this debrief using his unique '10,000 Volts' methodology and, thankfully, he said "yes" - immediately! This unique phenomenological research method comprehensively and accurately captures the lived experience of the delegates and there are no words adequate to thank Jonathan and his team for giving us so much of their time, skill and effort, all free of charge.

The success of this debriefing also relied on the wholehearted commitment of the delegates, and we owe a huge debt of gratitude to all of the safeguarding leads who gave up their precious time to participate and without whom this research would not have been possible. We also need to thank Luke Ramsden, Lisa Attack and Jackie Shanks, all with incredibly demanding jobs as very senior leaders in education, for giving up their time week in and week out as members of our Safeguarding Advisory Panel to support their fellow professionals.


Safeguarding is done by people for people and the safeguarding lead in a school or college is often the person holding ultimate responsibility for the safety and wellbeing of the children and young adults in their care. If anyone ever deserved a round of applause (and, more importantly, much more support) it is those safeguarding leads.

We hope that our weekly Covid-19 support sessions and this debriefing event have helped to lessen 'The Loneliness of The Long Distance Safeguarder' during this incredibly demanding period and that this debrief makes a useful contribution to the work of safeguarding leads in education. We're with them for the long run.



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## Executive Summary

- This report presents findings from a 10kV session, facilitated by Prof. Jonathan Crego at the behest of Martin Baker QPM on 24<sup>th</sup> June 2020, on safeguarding in education.
- Participants (N = 246) were safeguarding professionals from various roles across different educational settings in England, Wales and internationally.
- The dataset from the 10kV session comprised 946 separate comments (49,316 words total). Dr. Marie Eyre & Prof. Jonathan Crego conducted a qualitative analysis of the data.
- Results - Eight major themes (>7% total comments) & seven minor (<7% total comments) emerged.
- Major themes were: *Vulnerability* (14.8% total comments); *Contacting Children* (13.8%); *ICT Issues* (10.1%); *Mental Health Impact* (8.3%); *Children's Services/Social Care* (8.1%); *Other Agencies* (8.0%); *Safeguarding* (7.0%); *Return and Next Steps* (7.0%).
- The *Vulnerability* theme (14.8%) was a superordinate 'umbrella' theme encompassing *Safeguarding* and related themes: specifically, *Contacting Children*, *Mental Health Impact* and *Food*.
- *Contacting Children* (13.8%) was the primary strategy used to ensure that children were safe and well. Some communication difficulties were reported. In some comments, schools were reported as the only agency directly involved in supporting families' most basic needs (food) as well as education. Other comments praised charities' and churches' assistance.
- *Mental Health Impact* theme (8.3%) reported families in extremis, including suicide attempts by students' family members. Participants predicted adverse mental-health consequences from Covid-19 lockdown and interruption/cessation of education: effects were anticipated as long-term. Mental-health impact was reported as affecting children/young people and their families as well as staff in safeguarding and education.
- *Children's Services/Social Care* (CSC) (8.1%) was unusual in drawing sufficient comments for a separate theme. Participants reported CSC thresholds as so high as to eliminate them from effective safeguarding of children. Closing cases to manage workload prior to lockdown was also reported.
- *Other Agencies* (8.0%) A common 10kV theme - some positive comments were made on effective partnerships though comments on difficulties in multi-agency working were more common. Focus on stretched resources.
- *Safeguarding* (7.0%) Discussions on range of ways children and families with safeguarding issues were prioritised. The thread running throughout this theme was this: Resources stretched; services' ability to respond successfully compromised. This poses a clear danger to safeguarding vulnerable children.
- *Returns and Next Steps* (7.0%) Future focus in this theme was also echoed in the minor theme *Adapt and Innovate* (5.8%). Both themes show the emphasis safeguarders placed on future planning with new ways found to maintain/replicate services or to innovate in the absence of customary safeguarding and educative practices. Participants preferred returning groups on basis of need rather than simply by year group (believed return-by-need could be instrumental in safeguarding/supporting SEND children/young people).

- Minor themes were: *Adapt and Innovate* (5.8%); *Relationships* (4.0%); *Food* (3.9%); *Increased Workload* (3.8%); *Success and Pride* (2.8%); *MyConcern / my concern* (1.7%); *Domestic Abuse* (1%). Minor theme commentary can be shorter though illustrative quotations are still presented.
- Six core takeaway messages are provided with next-step recommendations and a conclusion to the report.

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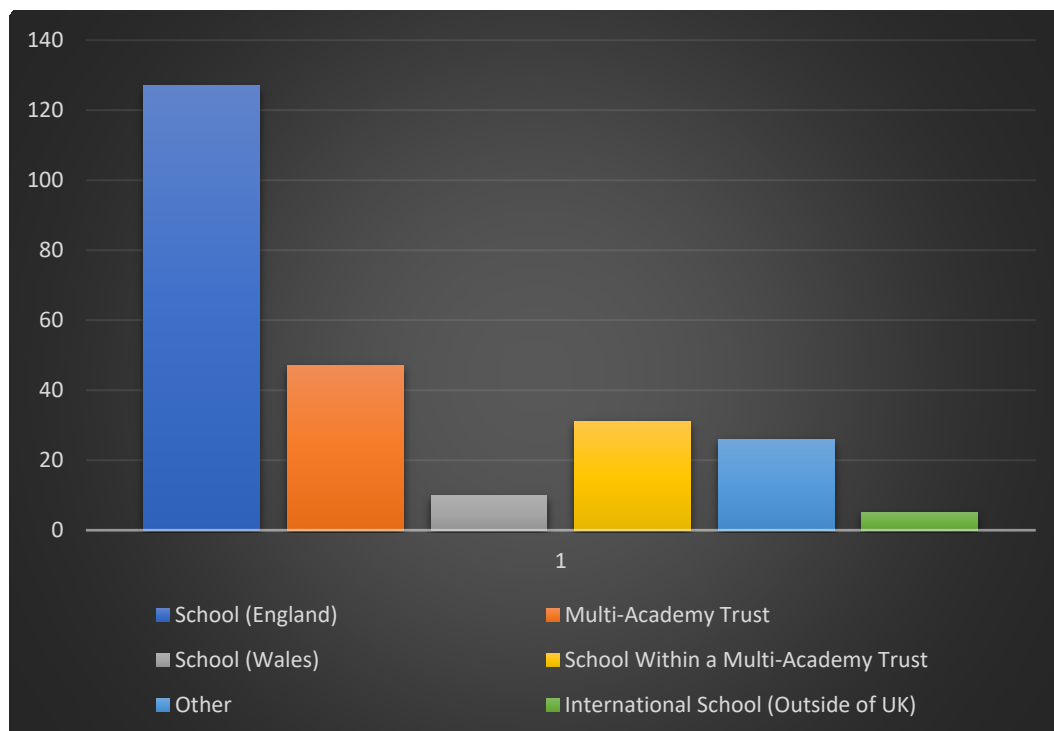
## 10,000 Volts Scope and Strategic Effect – Safeguarding in Education During Covid-19

**Overarching strategy** - Safeguarding Leads from schools in England and Wales are afforded time, during the ongoing C19 national emergency, to reflect upon their experiences and identify 'lessons learned' to be shared with other practitioners and with policy makers, including UK and Welsh Governments. Individual and collective reflective practice will help shape future policy and practice for safeguarding in education, taking lessons from beyond response into recovery and a 'new normal'.

The following agencies were invited to take part: (numbers in parentheses)

School (England) (127)  
Multi-Academy Trust (47)  
School (Wales) (10)  
School Within a Multi-Academy Trust (31)  
International School (Outside of UK) (5)  
Other (26)

Figure 1. *Participants x Agency in 10kV Safeguarding in Education Session.*



## Method

10 kV is an e-focus group technology designed by Professor Crego for the U.K. police service as an organisational learning tool. It is now part of a multi-method toolkit called CregoTools® delivered and supported by The Hydra Foundation ([www.HydraFoundation.org](http://www.HydraFoundation.org)). It enables anonymous engagement of all, allowing quiet voices to be heard. Any comment entered into the system is viewable by any participant, enabling debate, challenge, or development of ideas. During the 2020 Covid-19 Crisis, five events have been run for Local Resilience Forums (LRFs) and Strategic Coordination Groups (SCGs). Each debriefing session was 'attended' remotely by around 250 people and each workshop generated a dataset of between 40,000 and 60,000 words.

10kV was devised as a means of running debriefs in order to harness the learning from rare events. The complete anonymity provided by 10kV fosters open, candid accounts (Eyre, Crego & Alison, 2008). Traditionally, over the last 20 years and 400 debriefing sessions, the delegates would attend sessions together in a room. Typically, up to 60 iPads would be laid out on tables laid out in wedding style, and each person would have access to their own device. With the restrictions of Covid 19, it was simply not possible to operate in this style. Also, as we had been asked to run a session with full engagement of expert practitioners, right across the UK. Even if the social distancing restrictions were not in play, the prospect of bringing all these people together mid-crisis was not possible. 10kV technologies were adapted specifically for this debrief to operate on smartphones and tablets and included livestream video facilitation by Prof. Crego.

The questions were generated with the help of a subject matter expert group, was built on the concerns raised by practitioners during the free webinar sessions delivered by One Team Logic, the makers of MyConcern during the crisis.

## Questions presented to the delegates

### Q1. Activity within your school

(247 comments)

- What achievements are you most proud of?
- What isn't going so well and what have been the key challenges?
- What have been the key challenges for staff?
- What role has your MAT played (if applicable)?

### Q2. Identification, risk assessment & monitoring vulnerable children

(165 comments)

- What went well?
- What issues did you encounter in identifying and assessing vulnerable children?
- What issues did you encounter when monitoring and communicating with vulnerable children and their parents/carers?
- Describe any innovations that helped you to support vulnerable children and their families?

### Q3. Managing Online Contact with Children (Teaching & Learning)

(94 comments)

- What went well?
- What challenges did children, young people and families face in accessing online learning?
- What safeguarding issues did you face?

### Q4. Working with Other Agencies

(220 comments)

- What has been working well?
- What are the pressure points?
- What changes would you like to see and how could things be done differently?
- What should we consider when planning for any increase in safeguarding issues or cross-agency referrals as learners return?

### Q5. Personal Reflections & Insights

(214 comments)

- What are your personal insights relating to safeguarding during the Covid-19 crisis?
- What messages to you wish to convey to strategic decision makers going forward?
- What support might you require?

### Participants Attending

Participants were invited to the session on safeguarding children and young people during Covid-19 (N = 246). The sample was selected to cover a range of roles and agencies in the field of education and settings where children and young people frequent. The standardised educative and training procedures served to homogenise the sample on relevant dimensions. At the same time, the different roles represented allowed for variety within the general shared organisational culture of education.

### Analysis

The dataset comprised all comments captured during the 10kV session. A qualitative analysis was conducted by Prof. J. Crego and Dr. Marie Eyre, an analyst who is the departmental lead in qualitative methods at a Russell Group University, who is experienced with 10kV, and is a former secondary-school teacher. QDA Miner software® was employed for this analysis and initial findings are reported below. Note – indented sections are quotations from participants (shown in red italics) with the relevant comment number alongside in brackets [e.g., C222] to cross-reference to raw data. Whole comments were treated as meaningful text units for the basis of analysis (i.e., to retain the complete meaning of what a participant said). Consequently, this resulted in occasional coding overlaps (i.e., where a participant's comment covered issues relating to more than one theme). This would account for coding not equalling 100% of raw data. Obvious typos/punctuation errors have been corrected but quotations are otherwise verbatim. Every comment entered into the system was read and coded.

## Results

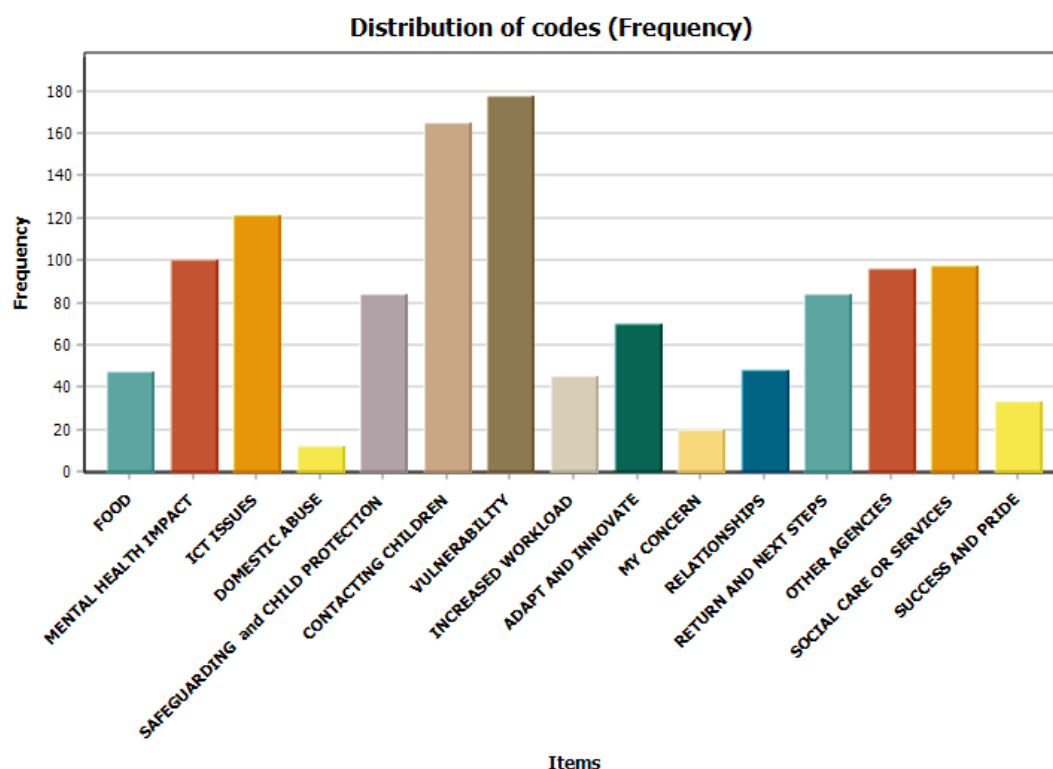
### Major Themes

There were 946 comments captured in the 10kV session (49,316 words excluding questions). Analysis produced 15 emergent themes across the dataset. For discussion purposes in the report, they are regarded as major themes (>7% total comments) and minor themes (<7% total comments). See Table 1 for details.

**Table 1.** Rank Order Themes Safeguarding Discussion

Major theme ☐ Minor theme ☐

Theme Name	No. of Total Comments (/946)	Percentage of Total Comments
<i>Vulnerability</i>	178	14.8%
<i>Contacting Children</i>	165	13.8%
<i>ICT Issues</i>	121	10.1%
<i>Mental Health Impact</i>	100	8.3%
<i>Children's Services/Social Care (CSC)</i>	98	8.1%
<i>Other Agencies</i>	96	8.0%
<i>Safeguarding</i>	84	7.0%
<i>Return and Next Steps</i>	84	7.0%
<i>Adapt and Innovate</i>	70	5.8%
<i>Relationships</i>	48	4.0%
<i>Food</i>	47	3.9%
<i>Increased Workload</i>	45	3.8%
<i>Success and Pride</i>	33	2.8%
<i>My Concern</i>	20	1.7%
<i>Domestic Abuse</i>	12	1.0%



**Table 2.** *Distribution of Codes*

## General Comment on Themes

The rank order highlights various issues. It is notable that, in a session on safeguarding, there were six themes which were more frequent topics of discussion than the *Safeguarding* theme; it is, however, also evident that some of the higher-frequency themes are clearly important elements in safeguarding children and young people. Specifically, the theme *Vulnerability* (14.8%) was an umbrella term which indicated participants' overall focus on children and young people. The next main concern was *Contacting Children* (13.8%) in order that the professionals could maintain knowledge and understanding of the children and young people's experiences whilst schools were closed. Also, in the cluster of themes focusing directly on children and young people themselves, the *Mental Health Impact*<sup>2</sup> (8.3%) theme revealed the degree of concern about the impact of interrupted education and lockdown on psychological wellbeing, contributing to children's vulnerability.

In addition to the directly 'children-centred' themes (see previous paragraph), another cluster of themes revolved more around service provision. *ICT Issues* (10.1%) pointed to the foundational necessity of internet access and suitable electronic devices when planning and delivering remote education. *Other Agencies* (8.0%) is a common theme to emerge from 10kV sessions in multi-agency settings and typically highlights the complexity or

<sup>2</sup> Note – the *Mental Health* theme included discussion of impact on adults as well as children.



challenges of inter-agency working. However, this analysis revealed so many comments on one particular agency, they were sufficient to categorise as a separate, major theme *Social Care or Services*<sup>3</sup> (8.1%): this is less typical and notable that it was discussed slightly more frequently than *Safeguarding* per se (7.0%). The final major theme *Return and Next Steps* (7.0%) showed that participants were future-based and planning ahead for children and young people.

Major themes (>7%) are discussed in detail below with commentary. Minor themes (<7%) are not discussed in detail but are listed with illustrative quotations for the sake of completeness. However, the emergence of the *Food* theme (3.9%) is an exception. It warrants comment that educators and safeguarders in a prosperous G8 Western nation needed to focus almost 3.9% of discussions on how they are having to meet such a basic physiological need as keeping children fed (Maslow, 1943). It acts too as a reminder that rank order is a convenient way to present themes but it has limits in that rank order doesn't necessarily equate to importance. Themes appear in rank order next.

### **Vulnerability (14.8%)**

Searching vulnerable and cognate terms drew more than 170 hits; in that respect, it was the most frequent theme; however, it tended to cross-match with comments already coded in other themes. It was concluded therefore that those themes had captured the construct *Vulnerability* in a more specific and useful way.

The theme was retained for frequency purposes but it should be noted that it is a superordinate theme. Under its umbrella, other themes (e.g., *Contacting Children*, *Mental Health Impact*) are more helpful in explaining the particular types of vulnerability that drew participants' concerns. Some illustrative quotations appear below:

*The dedication of our staff to our vulnerable children making weekly calls [C46].*

*Vulnerable families supported with regular food parcels due to strong links [C66].*

*Difficult to maintain virtual contact with some highly vulnerable families while we know that pupils aren't able to access any online contact with school [C98].*

### **Contacting Children (13.8%)**

This theme comprised 13.8% total discussion time. Its high frequency reflected the importance participants placed on maintaining contact with children as a fundamental part of their safeguarding activity.

*The difficulty of maintaining communication with some students has been an issue ... We have had a few instances where students in need of support were*

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<sup>3</sup> Referred to interchangeably as Social Services, Children's Services, Social Care or CSC.

*finding it difficult to access that due to chaotic home situations. In these instances, assistance and a commitment to trying different things until you find something that works has been the key [C119].*

*We have maintained regular contact (at least twice a week) by video calls with our vulnerable children. We have also had weekly contact with all our families. We successfully supported a mother who attempted suicide, with daily phone calls and messages, and she is now thriving [C24].*

The UK's child protection review for the parliamentary select committee (Munro, 2011) drew attention to the over-emphasis on procedures - what Munro termed, 'doing things right' (2011, p.6). Instead, Munro preferred a systems approach (e.g., Reason, 2000) whereby professionals 'do the right thing' (Munro, 2011, p.6); that is, instead of 'doing things right' by following set-down policy or procedure, professionals place more emphasis on 'doing the right thing' which is to focus on, and evaluate by checking, whether children and young people have been helped by the steps taken.

Some comments in this 10kV session showed a tendency towards focusing on safeguarders' actions/steps/procedures (see example comment below). This sometimes meant there was less emphasis on evaluating those actions for their success in protecting children. The authors invite reflection on this tendency and, in line with Munro (2011), also recommend a switch of emphasis by asking: a) 'How exactly did action X help the child?'; and b) 'How do we know?' In short, emphasise outcomes for the child more than input from the staff.

*During Covid lockdown, school has tried to keep as much contact with families as possible - online learning for the children, Facebook updates, school website updates, the SENDCo/safeguarding teacher has maintained weekly telephone contact with vulnerable families, those with social care involvement and EHCP children. Parents have been advised to send email to SENDCo/head/teachers, should they need a telephone call. Teachers have had daily communication with children via online learning. I feel we as a school, have tried to maintain as much contact as possible, and with enhanced communication for those who are more vulnerable. School has made, where possible, provision available for those who have had most need of help [C37].*

Overall, this theme revealed the considerable, sustained, ongoing efforts of safeguarders to maintain contact with the children in their care and their families.

### **ICT Issues (10.1%)**

This theme comprised 10.1% of total comments but it has a higher number of quotations because discussions covered several topics. It was evident that, notwithstanding schools' efforts at delivering hard-copy learning materials to children's homes, success in transitioning to remote teaching could stand or fall depending on students' ability to access the internet. For those able to rely on a student cohort with online access, a successful transition to remote education was reported.

*All timetabled lessons have continued using Teams and every student is registered with a 'hello' in the chat. Lesson time was cut by 10 minutes in order to stretch and move around could help lessen the screen fatigue. Overseas students were also able to access teaching through assignments and recordings if they weren't able to access lessons live. Pastoral leaders held twice weekly video calls with overseas and boarding students. Communication with parents via weekly newsletters and email [C428].*

*The local churches have been a great support ... they even donated tablets for children who could not access online learning [C19].*

Referred to as 'tech poverty' [C124], for poorer families, ICT was a fundamental challenge which reduced or stopped education completely. Comments on tech poverty far outweighed the comments on successful use of ICT for remote learning.

*Tech poverty - many of our families do not have access to laptops etc. and are sharing mum's phone between numerous siblings. Class teachers have been uploading daily lessons for the pupils but some cannot access it [C124].*

*Many of our students did not have suitable equipment and reliable Wi-Fi ... so engagement could be sporadic [C442].*

*One old smartphone in a family of four is not easy to plan learning around, even when paper copies were sent it then became 'death by worksheet' ... This led to disengagement quite quickly [C460].*

*A significant number of our families have limited and capped access to the Internet. This is disadvantaging our poorest children [C466].*

*Bandwidth! Lack of devices was not an issue but actually getting connectivity was. We have also had to accept that not every piece of missing work can be chased up and that's a cultural shift for some of my colleagues! [C464].*

Some senior managers decided to opt out of the inequitable situation altogether.

*Our leadership team took the decision not to use any form of online/virtual teaching/contact with pupils due to not already having anything established and also with concerns for safeguarding. We also have a proportion of families with no internet access, so it was decided to keep it as a level playing field. This has led to some criticism from some parents who have heard about what other schools locally are providing which has caused division [C120].*

Concern was expressed about the laptop scheme. The scheme drew no positive comments. In terms of numbers, laptops often ranged from too few to none; where delivery occurred, it was late.

*Challenge of sharing facilities (One laptop between seven children at the start of lockdown). The laptops from local authorities have just arrived (13 weeks in!!) The challenge of not having unlimited broadband meant some families ran out of data [C450].*

*The government promised laptops. We are yet to receive them. Funding has been slow and there will not be enough for our children [C465].*

*If you are making a pledge to provide laptops to disadvantaged children - ensure that the process of delivery is quick and it is backed up with providing good Internet access/Internet speed. For vulnerable children - make it more explicit on expectations for attendance. Too many have been shielded from view by parents [C881].*

*[We need] to have the laptops and Wi-Fi Connections that have been promised for so long. And to have more of them for the families that need them, not the 1% we've been allocated. Either we're going to help our families, or we're going to play at it. We can't then expect children to catch up when parents/carers don't have the equipment [C917].*

*No Internet. No laptops. And far more in this situation than the official figures suggested. Pupils use their phones if they have them. There are few who have their own laptop. The numbers of Wi-Fi and laptop equipment promised is a tiny fraction of what is needed [C493].*

Aside from the challenges faced by families who have no or inadequate access to online learning, there were positive comments made in this ICT theme. Participants commented on platforms and software that have been used successfully for distance learning and for professional collaboration during lockdown. These comments indicated some potential for successful online learning as well as safeguarding if resources were made available.

*Use of VLE has been very effective. Staff in many different roles have been submitting a story of the day for children to read online [C425].*

*I am a safeguarding manager at a secondary school. We have offered school counselling via Microsoft Teams/phone contact [C939].*

*Giving staff school mobile phone so they are not having to block their numbers and families now know it is them who is calling [C125].*

*The use of online platforms such as MS Teams has made my role as a DSL more effective as I am able to attend more meetings [C655].*

*What came through before the policy was not clear enough, i.e., can use Zoom but our local LA had decided against it so didn't feel safe to*

*use remote contact where there were too many safeguarding issues for the children and professionally. I work with vulnerable, challenging families [C503].*

*Our teaching platforms have been Teams or Big Blue Button, as these were considered safe [C518].*

*We did nothing by Zoom due to safety risks but communicated via Teams and Business Skype - very successful and time effective [C514].*

*All of the publicity around security issues with Zoom in particular caused our IT team to be very risk averse. We had to wait several weeks while they introduced Microsoft Teams [C49].*

In sum, ICT was fundamental to a successful transition to remote learning. Many families suffered tech poverty and had no/inadequate access. The laptop scheme largely failed. Professionals adapted service delivery through successful online platforms.

### **Mental Health Impact (8.3%)**

Participants expressed concerns about the mental-health impact of lockdown; that is, concerns were not confined to pre-existing mental-health issues for children and young people in their care. Mental distress was experienced by themselves as professionals, by their students, and lockdown changes among students' parents/carers and family members. Some reported serious crises, with risks of fatalities. Other mental-health changes from lockdown were positive.

*I've kept daily (yes daily) contact with a vulnerable family - I'm proud that the family have found this helpful. Child has had overwhelming thoughts to want to die and has tried at least three times that we know of during lockdown - lives with 71 yr old Gran - mum had suicide attempts too - Gran has said that I'm the only person who has been consistent throughout . Arranged food boxes, top up of phone credit, liaison with agencies etc. Still struggle and it had a toll on me so I'm managing my mental health carefully too [C28].*

*[In response] Thank you - you have made a huge difference to this family [C29].*

*Lessons via Zoom have proved problematic for most as they are reluctant to appear on camera due to anxiety issues - I have often found myself talking to somebody's curtains or their dog [C442].*

*Many parents who suffer anxiety/depression have found the isolation a positive thing as they feel safe and secure within their home. Parents whose children have been offered a place at school have refused on this basis alone. This means that the children are missing out on relationships at school and of course their education [C938].*

*For some families, children being at home has been a positive experience for both parent and child. Some children who have anxiety at school and whose behaviour is poor have thrived in the home environment. Some parents are even considering home tuition [C913].*

Belongingness is known to be a significant factor in successful education and can adversely affect individual wellbeing if it is lost (e.g., Vaz et al., 2015). It is evident educators took steps to maintain belongingness and mitigate adverse mental-health effects.

*We sent each child a 'We are missing you' postcard and posted a video message from all the stuff [C82].*

*Hundreds of personalised cards, letters and work posted to students [C58].*

As seen in the *Return and Next Steps* theme (below), participants were future-focused and anticipated medium- to long-term impact on mental health.

*School refusal and social anxiety are beginning to rapidly increase. Lockdown perpetuated home as a 'safe place' and we work with a number of young children and families who are now not leaving home at all, and some young people who haven't left their bedroom for weeks. I think online gaming addictions will massively surge [C940].*

*That is likely to be a big spike in emotional health issues plus an uncovering of issues hidden due to remote learning. Unless schools have more funding for staff to sort this, plus qualified staff to use that funding, there will be a big increase in referrals to children's services, mental health teams, early help teams etc. These teams will also need capacity increasing if they are to provide timely support [C653].*

*I agree that the impact this will have had on children's mental health will be long lasting - a structured national response is required [C791].*

*[In response] Completely agree. I am really surprised that the government haven't already enlisted a national mental health task force. Yesterday I came across an open letter from the end of May that the BPS (British Psych. Society) along with 25 other partners wrote to the government. I have not seen a published reply [C792].*

Staff reported that the situation has also had an adverse impact on their own mental health and wellbeing. Comments clustered around the adverse impact of managing uncertainty.

*Despite being promised weekly check-in from head, I have had little well-being support from school. If I hadn't been able to access my lovely garden, I would have really struggled to maintain my own mental health. I am shielding and working from home, calling vulnerable parents,*



*contacting social workers and family support workers. It has, at times, been very stressful. [C249].*

*Please do not announce changes before publishing guidance for schools and colleges as it causes lots of undue stress for staff and families ... Consider the fact that staff have been working tirelessly throughout this process, and managing their own emotions too. Please consider how you will support staff in school and families to deal with the future impact of this [C881].*

*I have felt out of control regularly and guilt for not being in school managing my own wellbeing whilst working from home and having a young family has been tough, and I have regularly felt like a failure. Now worrying about what we will return to. The media have not helped with their stories of lazy teachers and the government with their lack of guidance [C781].*

In sum, the *Mental Health Impact* theme drew some positive comments but mostly featured mental distress and severe crisis caused by lockdown. In anticipating future plans, calls were made for government and other strategic leaders to listen to participants' concerns about imminent/future demands on service delivery, to respond, and address a perceived forthcoming mental health crisis.

### **Children's Services/Social Care (CSC) (8.1%)<sup>4</sup>**

This theme accounted for 8.1% of total discussion. As mentioned earlier, agency partnerships is a common theme in 10kV sessions from multi-agency contexts. For a single agency to acquire its own theme is atypical. Some comments were positive. Unfortunately, this theme overwhelmingly revolved around concerns about inadequate involvement or support.

*Agencies have worked well in [place name redacted]. I've had contact from Social Care, STePs, CAMHs, Ed. Psy [C704].*

*Following a referral to Social Care at the beginning of lockdown the referral was marked as NFA as they couldn't contact parents. Following two further referrals, the case has now been picked up for assessment. I think that interagency communication is improving. I have also found that remote CIN meetings and conferences have worked well on the whole [C716].*

CSC were reported as 'stepping down' if another agency (school) was involved or would take responsibility. Closing cases was also perceived to be a deliberate feature of managing workload that could leave children unprotected without schools' input.

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<sup>4</sup> Also see Reflexivity section below re. this theme.

*Remote CIN meetings have generally worked well but Social Care feel that because our pupils are supported by our service (a medical PRU) they no longer need to be involved [C722].*

*I seem to be working 12-13 hour days some days when I'm supporting a family in crisis but social workers are much better at saying, "I've finished for the day and can't be contacted" - when you call out-of-hours services they take hours to respond to our concerns and most times I've sorted things out before they respond and then the duty social worker will say, "Oh well done, I don't need to call that family" - Yes you do - I feel as a school were being relied on too much to do everything and feel let down by the agencies [C137].*

*[In response] Wholeheartedly agree with this. We feel we are constantly phoning and emailing social workers to update and share our concerns. We believe these are genuine concerns but feel they are not taken seriously. We feel that social workers are under pressure to close cases before any outcomes have been achieved [C138].*

*It does seem odd and frustrating that we are prepared to visit vulnerable families but Children's Services won't [C584].*

*There have been times when we cannot get in touch with a child with a social worker, and been told to 'Call it in' to Children Services, and when we have [we're] told there is nothing that can be done [C229].*

In sum, *Children's Services/Social Care (CSC)* was an overwhelmingly negative theme reporting the agency's lack of involvement and its high thresholds for response to safeguarding concerns. It points to a service at breaking point. This theme links to the next two themes below in this respect: all three themes cluster around capacity problems and inability to deliver a service.

### **Other Agencies (8.0%)**

Many school staff felt they had not received the support they needed from partner agencies. The challenge of multi-agency working is an extremely common theme in 10kV sessions (e.g., incompatible systems, policies and procedures) though its ubiquity does not mitigate the importance of making improvements. Challenges in this session were also related to stretched resources.

*It has been harder to get responses from MH teams due to their workload. We have liaised with Police and Social Services (although not had a quick response there either) and sort [sic – 'sought' is inferred] advice for safeguarding boards [C698].*

*[In response] Agree. This has been difficult for us too. Even trying to get an update on a referral already in the system [C699].*

*[A key challenge is] getting support from CAMHS.*

*The same is true of our LA. I am attending the professionals meeting this morning for an autistic student who ended up on a ventilator a fortnight ago following an overdose. When I suggested that the SEND officer should be invited, I was asked to evidence what contribution I thought she could make to the meeting. He has an EHCP. Unbelievable! [C841].*

*I have placed myself in situations of risk as I have felt that there are no other agencies out there to support times of high risk for individual children [C776].*

*I completely agree; since the beginning, I felt the weight on me to keep everyone safe. It literally is like have lives in your hands that you have to juggle and fight for. I do not feel that I have been fully supported by my line manager and have struggled to get other services to respond [C925].*

In sum, the problematic emphasis – lack of support from other agencies – is similar to the earlier theme of *Children's Services/Social Care* insofar as they point to insufficient capacity of services to deliver effectively. In other words, services may be at the tipping point of being simply unable to keep children safe. The *Mental Health Impact* theme indicates that schools cannot sustain their considerable efforts at safeguarding children in the long term. Similar concerns were shared in the next theme.

### **Safeguarding and Child Protection (7.0%)**

Participants discussed the range of ways in which they had prioritised children and families where there were safeguarding issues. The thread running throughout this theme was this: resources were stretched and services' ability to respond successfully was compromised. This poses a clear danger to safeguarding vulnerable children. The overlap with the two previous themes *Children's Services/Social Care (CSC)* and *Other Agencies* is particularly apparent in the first comment below.

*Engagement with other agencies when visits to family homes were an absolute priority. Limited support from SC – e.g., [we had] children on CP plans where no contact is possible [C114].*

*The vast amount of emails, reports and meetings has at times been extremely overwhelming as it feels that the greater amount of responsibility has been put on schools to ensure the safe [well] being of our students [C769].*

*Challenges of students with ASD - families have found it difficult to support at home but not wanted to send into school because of the different routines/social distancing measures. Very little support for them from (local) authority. Schools do their best to support but not necessarily able to help at home [C450].*

*I am undertaking the same day-to-day duties as a DSL but without the recognition of this and without the ability to be promoted to this within a school setting. It is very frustrating [C779].*

In this theme, some expressed concerns about the effectiveness of remote contact and monitoring of vulnerable children and young people.

*Difficult to ascertain by online meeting/phone calls how things really are for young people. I think that on occasions they have not opened up via these methods. Leaves me with an uneasy feeling that I might have missed something. Not comfortable with possible disregard for online safety/safeguarding practises despite our best effort to staff to stress this with families and regularly communicating that vigilance and knowing what their children are accessing is vital [C770].*

Participants' considerable efforts were evident in this theme. A downside of thematic reports is that they can sometimes fragment and thus reduce the 'big picture' efforts. The comments below (also coded under *Food, Contacting Children* etc.) have been reported complete to show the range and scale of work schools are undertaking during Covid-19. The comments speak to the core topic of safeguarding.

*As an inner-city school in a deprived area ... only two key-worker children needed to attend. We therefore focused our efforts on ensuring that our most vulnerable children were supported. We also have speech and language resource base with children with EHCPs. These children have been contacted weekly, ensuring that their needs are being met. The school has faced challenges with transport for these children but four of them also on a CP plan were prioritised transport to enable them to attend. We have also provided school spaces to six children from a local refuge. While we cannot put them on our school roll, we felt it was important to offer these vulnerable children a safe place to continue their education and to give them some stability...We have ensured that all of our FSM families have received the food vouchers they needed and have delivered food packages to homes where needed. We have also put out a food bank table when parents collect/drop off their children for them to help themselves to any things that they need. When we have had no response from our fortnightly monitoring calls, we have completed doorstep visits. The vulnerable children who were not attending school (either due to shielding or parents refusing to send) we have completed weekly calls and or doorstep visits. [C53].*

*[In response] Your school sounds outstanding. You should be proud [C54].*

*All vulnerable children who were on a Child Protection Plan, CIN Plan EHA were offered a place in school. For those whose parents declined*

*the place, doorstep visits were completed often once or twice a week. In addition to the vulnerable children, places were offered to children who we knew would benefit more by being in school. Children who declined the place, doorstep visits were completed. In addition to this, the Family Support Lead kept in contact with them via the telephone. PP children were provided with food parcels as well as low income families who we identified as needing extra support at this time. All home visits and phone calls made were recorded; next step tasks were implemented [C244].*

*My day is spent triaging concerns, managing a massive increase in emails from social workers, CAMHS workers and other professionals as well as closely liaising with colleagues regarding their welfare checks with vulnerable students. I have been doing weekly to 10-day check ins with all CP/CIN/LAC students, and making record of these check ins. I personal(ly) have managed to get two extremely anxious students back into school with 1:1 pastoral support [C36].*

In sum, this theme revealed the immense efforts made by school to safeguard children as well as sounding warnings about insufficient capacity of services to continue to do so into the future.

### **Return and Next Steps (7.0%)**

Seven per cent of total discussion time was given to planning for the future. This future focus was also echoed in the first minor theme *Adapt and Innovate*. Taken together, the two themes *Return and Next Steps* (7.0%) and *Adapt and Innovate* (5.8%) show the emphasis safeguarders placed on being flexible and remaining flexible. They found new ways to maintain and replicate services or to innovate in the absence of customary safeguarding and educational practices.

Participants discussed their preference for returning school groups to be selected on basis of need rather than simple year group. They expressed their belief that this could be instrumental in safeguarding and supporting SEND children and young people.

*I would have preferred to extend the provision for more vulnerable children rather than have set year groups in. We have children at home who would really benefit from school and there is no room for them while we have children in school in year 1 and 6 who were doing very well at home. This would be my top priority for what we could do differently as a country if we had this time again [C794].*

*[In response] Totally agree – we are a middle school and for our particular context it would have made sense for us to invite in Year 8 and Year 4. This would not only have helped with September transition but also enabled us to conclude their learning journey with us [C795].*

*There is a large group of autistic children who have really struggled with lockdown. This is a group that will find it incredibly difficult to re-engage. As a DSL, I have found that one of the main areas of support has been reassuring these families. Would like this group of young people to have specific, guided strategies for their return to school. Very worried that the mental health issues are going to be huge and that many of these young people will not have access in [city name redacted] to the support needed and that schools will not have the expert guidance needed to support these students or stop the potential long term impact frightens me [C840].*

In sum, this theme covered participants' views on returning to schools post-lockdown, their future-focus and flexibility plus concerns for consequences in the longer term.

### Minor Themes

#### Adapt and Innovate (5.8%)

Practitioners discussed many ways in which they have adapted their practices to the current situation. Some with resources to implement their plans had successful transitions in terms of delivering education programmes.

*Being ready! As we are a boarding school, we were hearing about the impact of COVID-19 quickly through our students and our parents. At least two weeks before school closures we were learning about remote learning, remote meetings and within that the safeguarding practices that needed to be shared [C21].*

That this emerged as a theme highlights a feature of disaster response. After the initial (stage 1) emergency rescue response during a disaster, there is a second stage whereby relevant individuals and organisations attempt to replicate goods or services which are available in normal circumstances but are now inaccessible/unavailable because of the disaster. In this session, these stage 2 responses were seen in, for example, the establishment of a virtual reflection room for students (which function replicated the actual room in school). When this second stage 'attempt to replicate services' fails, individuals begin to innovate – the third stage of disaster response. This was seen here in participants' responses. Schools approached churches and charities to supply food when usual supply sources (i.e., families) could not.

*We set up a virtual reflection room - to replace the actual room we have in school for students to drop into if they're feeling worried/lonely etc. - this is run by the school LSA and has been very well used through school closure [C14].*

*[In response] What a lovely, innovative idea [C18].*

In short, this theme evidenced human behaviours indicative of disaster responses.



## Relationships (4.0%)

Discussions in this theme focused mainly on the ways that relationships have developed for the better, primarily between schools and children and their families. This was attributed to the regular, sustained contact while schools have been closed. Comments were typically positive and focussed on the strengthening of relationships between school and family/child as well as the development of better relationships within the community.

*We were also really proud of the stronger relationships we have built with our school community, especially those parents who are frequently hard to reach. Our conversations have been more open and honest, there is no sense of 'blame' or 'shame'. It is very much 'We're all in this together' and there is a lot more empathy and kindness [C60].*

*Some (children and families) have also found the online format has made it easier for them to open up, which has been interesting [C61].*

Taken together with the *Contacting Children* theme, it is evident that one of the main benefits has been improved relationships between schools and families, especially those who are vulnerable. The increased contact demanded during Covid-19 was instrumental in effecting those improved relationships. However, it is also evident from the many comments on increased workload that it would be unsustainable in the long-term to continue developing these enhanced relationships without further resources to do so. We welcome reflection on this issue.

## Food (3.9%)

Professionals spent sufficient time talking about food for it to be classified as a theme. In terms of simple frequency, it is a minor theme but an important one. In Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1943) - alongside water, warmth, and rest - food is the most basic physiological need humans have (See Appendix, Fig. 2). That safeguarders and educators have to act to ensure children do not go hungry in a Western, developed G8 nation is a cause for grave concern. The comments showed the safeguarders succeeded. The voucher scheme was criticised as too slow.

*Home visits took place alongside dropping off FSM food hampers we stayed in touch with families and parents responded really positive as they enjoyed seeing someone from outside their home [C277].*

*FSM provided on site and via home delivery until the voucher scheme kicked in [C65].*

*We go round in a minibus dropping schoolwork and FSM vouchers to parents who can't access them. We also ask to see the children, which most times it's worked. [C240].*

*The free school meal system has been rubbish - we put money in families' accounts and have liaised with local charities for food boxes to be delivered [C37].*

*[In response] Yes, we did the same. The local churches have been a great support delivering food parcels and meals. They even donated tablets for children who could not access online learning [C39].*

*We too have been delivering food packages and just having a chat on the doorstep if we felt that helped and basically just going above and beyond. I found it really difficult to hear the news talking about schools being closed when the whole staff team were putting in many extra hours just to ensure that we were meeting not only the children's needs, but the needs of the whole family [C28].*

*Remember that not every family lives in a gated community with a garden. Most of our families have had no opportunity to go outside. They have struggled for food, have landlords who would not waive rent, and have tiny spaces for families. I wish strategic decisions were made with these families in mind [C829].*

*Families of children with restricted diets watching their children go hungry because they couldn't access the shops to get the right food [C922].*

***Please remember just how many families relied on food parcels and hardship funds - it's a scandal that in 2020 people are unable to feed their families which has a direct impact on their ability to support their children's education [C808].***

This theme is gravely concerning and not an issue on which a neutral, so-called 'objective' stance is acceptable. Taking a position is a moral obligation. As C808 made clear, "It's a scandal that in 2020 people are unable to feed their families". Educators have a different job and should not need to step in to fill the vacuum.

### **Increased Workload (3.8%)**

Participants commented on their hard work in this theme and the excessive demands on them. Safeguarding coupled with educational responsibilities was shown to be too large and demanding a role.

*I feel strongly that safeguarding should be a profession in its own right. It makes me angry that I am on the frontline and dealing with a range of difficult issues but that I cannot become a DSL. You have to be on the senior leadership team within a school to hold this role. I am currently working with someone who has just been promoted to this role and does not have the experience I have of the job [C778].*

*The workload has been extraordinary - this was very unexpected [C779].*

*The teachers have worked long hours including in the holidays and stayed open to key workers' children all holidays. This is not complaining - just had to be done! Teachers really need a break in the summer! [C206]*

*An understanding of the fact that being a DSL at this time is an unenviable job. I am working crazy hours because I care. I am aware that some of my senior colleagues are working less hours. This is difficult to swallow it on honest. I'm carrying a massive responsibility at the moment. It's important that DSLs get the national recognition they deserve. School leaders and governors will be praised. A little recognition for the passion, resilience and tenacity of those breed of DSLs would be appreciated. I'm sure I speak for others [C906].*

Safeguarders would welcome recognition of the demands of the role and the efforts they have made during a national emergency.

### **Success and Pride (2.8%)**

Participants are typically reluctant to self-champion, so they were asked specifically to provide information or actions of which they felt proud. This theme highlighted the many ways that professionals have shown flexibility to ensure service delivery was sustained throughout lockdown. It links to the theme *Adapt and Innovate* which details some of the ways in which these professionals responded to this global emergency. It is utterly unsurprising that they should feel proud of the successes they had in maintaining contact with children. Their adaptability and unwavering commitment were self-evident. It is always the case that it is hardest to prove the benefits of something that did not happen. Nonetheless, this conclusion seems safe enough: without the sustained dedication of these professionals, more children could and would have been significantly harmed.

*I have felt proud of the flexibility of members of staff to work around their own personal challenges in order to keep the children within our school safe and cared for [C5].*

*I am really proud of the way we have adapted to continue to provide excellent support for our families. My colleagues have been outstanding and most definitely have gone the extra mile in this crisis ... feedback from people [and] some families has been incredibly positive and heart-warming [C763].*

*[In response] Completely agree with this. This is true for our school too [C764].*

*One of the most stressful events of my career. Coordinating safeguarding for the entire school, every pupil, and supporting staff, ha[s] been very difficult. Feel like I'm doing that with little outside support from the main agencies (Social Services and police) has been isolating. The staff here have been amazing and that has made all the difference. Incredibly proud to work alongside all the people that I do. Every one of them has put our children first. I wish newspapers and media*

*could see the dedication across the country on this. It makes me mad to see the anti-teacher sentiments for an easy hit [C759].*

*I am incredibly proud of the way my staff have pulled together throughout this whole process to ensure that they have been there for our children, supported them in any way they can and, in many cases, put their own family concerns to one side allowing us to remain open (except for Bank Holidays) since March 20th! [C88].*

*I am really proud of how all my staff has engaged in supporting their tutees remotely. We made the decision very early on that the primary contact with home would become the tutors, rather than the housemasters, and I've been thrilled at how they have stepped up to the plate and have engaged with parents and pupils remotely. I am also immensely proud of how we have used technologies (predominantly MS Teams) to stay in touch with pupils and families, all within a controlled environment with appropriate safeguards in place [C99].*

*Purchasing school mobile phones so that families could see the number that was calling them, was a big success [C317].*

*The system we set up the monitoring vulnerable children worked well. A shared Excel document keeping track of conversations that had taken place between teachers and students kept everyone up to date and [g]ave DSLs and teachers, head teachers a snapshot of how things were going. DSL could also keep track if no contact was made during a longer period and ensure that this was followed up with relevant agencies when needed [C259].*

In sum, *Success and Pride* comments revealed the central roles schools have played in safeguarding children and the hard work and exceptional effort it has taken to do so.

### **MyConcern / my concern (1.7%)<sup>5</sup>**

Participants commented specifically on how this had worked well to assist contact with children and families. It also provided an avenue of support for staff.

*The amazing pastoral support of all our students but especially those classed as vulnerable or those with welfare issues. Being able to do my job successfully thanks to MyConcern [C55].*

*Identification of vulnerable students was easy in some ways as we had MyConcern so were able to use this to RAG all the students. County information was confusing as it changed but we kept all students [C321].*

*MyConcern has been extremely valuable tool for recording concerns and delegating tasks to colleagues. We have a weekly support panel*

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<sup>5</sup> Also see Reflexivity section below re. this theme.

*check in to discuss students, with everyone doing their bit to chip in and our robust system it has made the job somewhat easier [C769].*

*I found supervision and the MyConcern webinars most supportive to my being able to keep a clear head and keep going forward safely [C779].*

In sum, this was a very straightforward minor theme where participants praised a particular system (but see Reflexivity below).

### **Domestic Abuse (1.0%)**

This had been anticipated as a prevalent theme. However, analysis showed it not to be the case. At just 1% discussion time, it is the theme that almost wasn't there. Other services have experienced increased demand during lockdown (e.g., domestic-abuse support services; police response to increased violent assault). This disparity warrants inspection as it may be that educators and other safeguarders are not being successful in eliciting reports of domestic abuse experiences. The data were searched using the following search terms alongside domestic abuse and cognates with results in parentheses alongside: violence (3), violent (0), hit\*, (0, domestic abuse-related although 'hit' was used in other semantic contexts, e.g., 'The waiting lists are so long and you have to hit such a high threshold'), beat\* (0), fight (2, both referring to a fight for other agency involvement). It is therefore concerning that domestic abuse was discussed so little during a safeguarding children session. Comments on domestic abuse or related are listed in their entirety below (total = 10).

*We have struggled to support a family where there is domestic abuse in the house as we have been unable to work with the parents separately. They have not sent their children into school so it has been difficult to speak to the children on their own [C106].*

*DV notifications from police have been very helpful in enabling us to set up contact plans for some children that otherwise would not have been on the list [C300].*

*We have had several domestic violence reports during lockdown. We have changed how we deal with them. It is, however, a worry as to how these students have been impacted and whether they have the support they need. It is a long time until September when we will see them again. I feel that we need time to prepare for this but I'm not sure we will get it [C366].*

*We have engaged tutors on a comprehensive programme of keeping in touch, but many pupils do not give much away. Are they hiding a major concern, or are they simply disengaged? That has been really tough [C110].*

*'Operation encompass', a system developed by Kent police, send(s) us a notification if there has been a DA incident that one of our students has been involved with. Again, this has been incredibly useful [C411].*

*Online homework platforms have proved hugely valuable ... also highlighted an escalating serious safeguarding concern around domestic violence whereby communication with others was being denied [C424].*

*We get notifications from the police when there is DV incident within the family where a pupil from our school resides. These are useful to receive; however, we don't get the details so we need to contact families directly and find out. Most of the time, the families are hard to reach [C242].*

*[In response] This is fascinating as part of our DV notifications we are told: Schools should not visit or discuss this information with the family (unless the child or family member separately discloses that domestic abuse is occurring) [C243].*

*Using a RAG system around those in need ... extending the definition by including those ... DV cases and so on [C261].*

*Who sees the family when there are DV concerns and when the perpetrator is at the house all the time [C641].*

**In sum, domestic abuse was a very small theme that was expected to be larger. Other data sources indicate DV has increased during lockdown. We invite reflection on the reasons behind the disparity.**

### Sharing Best Practice

Much best practice has been shared in the discussion of themes above. This section brings together some further examples to share with each other. Those efforts already discussed above - rallying to feed families, supporting, protecting, and providing a listening ear, continuing education and so forth - are not repeated here. This section is simply a list of other best-practice tips that colleagues found worked well. Note – some best-practice ideas were shared by more than one person but only one illustrative quotation has been included per idea. The section is devoted to participants' voices.

*We set up a Wellbeing area in our online learning platform, uploading a wellbeing activity every day. Things such as cloud watching, cooking, mindfulness etc. for families to look at as well as the learning aspects [C6].*

*We set up a virtual 'Reflection Room' - to replace the actual room we have in school for students to drop into if they're feeling worried/lonely etc - this is run by the school ELSA and has been very well used throughout school closure [C14].*



*We put money in families' accounts and have liaised with local charities for food boxes to be delivered [C17].*

*We contacted two local churches and one of them supplied £4k of supermarket vouchers to hand out to those who needed them. We allowed families to self-identify, no questions asked. Of course, we had a good idea of who is low income, free school meals etc. but those who don't fall into those categories may well have lost their jobs (we wouldn't know this, would we?) or their support network (where grandparents pick up many times a week and feed their children supper but [are] now shielding) so we felt it important that families self-refer for these vouchers [C20].*

*Handwritten cards delivered. Online mindfulness [C52].*

*We have also provided school spaces to six children from a local refuge. While we cannot put them on our school roll, we felt it was important to offer these vulnerable children a safe place to continue their education and to give them some stability. The school has worked with their parents to support them in completing school applications ... We have also put out a food bank table when parents collect/drop off their children for them to help themselves to anything that they need [C53].*

*We have provided iPads and laptops to our LAC and vulnerable students [C59].*

*Our conversations have been more open and honest, there is no sense of 'blame' or 'shame'. It is very much, 'We're all in this together' and there is a lot more empathy and kindness [C60].*

*The SLT decided early on that we needed to have a COVID-19 task group. This was made up of DSL, residential care managers, teachers, learner support workers, and the lead nurse. We meet each week to discuss plans, risk assessments, gov[t.] guidelines, pressure from others, PPE and what is needed etc. This group has worked well to ensure that staff feel they are listened to ... we have a decision log to clearly outline any decisions made, actions, why we have made those decisions and how effective they were. This group seems to have brought sense of inclusion to all [C66].*

*We have had added Home Learning Packs weekly to the school website, added links to these via Parent Hub, Class Dojo and have delivered paper copies of these to local supermarkets, where parents have collected these whilst completing their shopping [C76].*

*We have young people with autism and behaviours that challenge, so the two-metre distance has been incredibly difficult; however, we have managed to overcome this to a certain extent with preparation, photos of how different things may be, social stories etc. [C117].*

*Working in isolation has been challenging, am I doing what other DSLs are doing, how do I know my decision-making is right? Listening in to other colleagues during the MyConcern webinars w[as] reassuring [C121].*

*Huge issue with secondary school engagement with our Year 6 children transitioning ... some of our local secondaries have put up dedicated websites, have posted video tours and are offering Zoom calls to all new children by appointment [C152].*

*Relationships will need to be nurtured and carefully managed when we return as despite our best efforts ... there is a culture of them and us emerging. School vs. parent, teachers in school vs. teachers who are unable to come into school [etc.] ... The key so far has to be honest and open ... now is not the time to ignore these niggles [C191].*

*School counsellor offering remote and socially distanced counselling sessions [C298].*

*DV notifications from police have been very helpful in enabling us to set up contact plans for some children that otherwise would not have been on the list [C300].*

*My concern is that we are missing some of those students who may have disclosed if we were in school. We are training 14 staff in mental health first aid ready for September to help combat any potential influx of disclosures [C329].*

*Use of the VLE has been very effective. Staff in many different roles have been submitting a story of the day for children to read online [C405].*

*The local police share information with us in order for us to be aware of families struggling [C408].*

*'Operation Encompass', a system developed by Kent Police send us a notification if there has been a DA incident that one of our students has been involved with ... this has been incredibly useful [C411].*

*The Government of Jersey set up a hub and all advice for many services was managed from one main site. The heading up the hub identified vulnerable children and schools were notified of the children on this list [C412].*

*[Worked well] Weekly themes and challenges other than academic (e.g., Blue Peter badges) [C419].*

*Weekly Skype/Zoom calls allowed children to see their friends [C420].*

*IT set up a system so when students submitted work it was renamed with their name so staff could easily identify who it was from rather than then having 30 documents! It also meant the files were not overwritten by mistake [C427].*

*I encouraged teachers to self-refer if they experienced a potential problem on Teams and this culture of honesty was valued by colleagues [C431].*

*We had a list of expectations for keeping safe online sent out to teachers and added as an appendix to school policy. If teachers had any concerns about online interactions, then it is brought to the DSL immediately and logged [C477]. [In response] Like the idea of adding an appendix to the school policy for online interaction - I will take that back to the SLT [C478].*

*Had to be quite creative to keep the communication with the children! ... thought about their interests and used those; for one child, will look up and share jokes, another is texting about football etc. I am now also sending letters with SAE for them to respond if they want to. It felt important to keep the relationship going so the conversations about returning to school, and how they feel about it, were possible [C503].*

*Our local authority ha[s] set up a virtual school for vulnerable children, an initiative launched by the head teacher of our virtual school. It's in its relative infancy but is an excellent forum ... it's enabled sharing of good practice [C525].*

*Virtual meetings have ensured greater attendance from all professionals and conversations 'around the table' have been richer and better informed as a result of this [C535].*

*A senior person from the LA within the safeguarding education team to be a link person for each school. This provided senior staff with a 'go to' person to support when encountering difficulties. Schools found and still do find this really helpful [C536].*

*We have had amazing support from our police school liaison officers, who have attended house visits with us [C540]. [In response] This would be good to have on a national scale as we don't have. I could see it working well [C541].*

*For the first time ever, I have mobile numbers for workers and the communication with them has always been strong but is now tighter and more effective. Use of Teams and Skype have really tightened safeguarding and shouldn't be abandoned in my opinion when 'normality resumes' [C543].*

*CAMHS has never been more efficient. Before lockdown, turnaround time on a call was about 8 working days, now same day. Whatever has happened needs to stay [C548].*

*The 'link worker' model needs to stay beyond this crisis. We have found a number of safeguarding concerns have been concluded at a much faster rate as a result of our weekly conversation with our link worker [C629].*

*All children returning to school in September will be anxious. Our curriculum has been altered to ensure wellbeing is at the heart of it [C730].*

*A big shout out to the charity 'Family Lives' for supporting a family of ours that has completely broken down during the pandemic [C731].*

*Parents have become more open and willing to share. I think it is the safety of the distance, not face to face, gave them some freedom to talk more. It has strengthened our relationships [C740].*

*Some staff have medical conditions or personal circumstances outside the government guidance for shielding. We have been encouraged to share confidentially with the governors and have been supported to work at home [C740].*

*Since wider opening, it is clear smaller classes with less test-driven academic pressure has led to me seeing much happier children who are still learning. Parents reporting their children are sleeping better, happier, full of information [C767]. [In response] This is an amazing reflection and I would reiterate that policymakers and strategic decision makers should take note of this. This is going to be one of my 'takeaway' comments from today [C768].*

*One really positive thing to come out of this for our schools have been the impact of phone calls to children and families ... parents have really looked forward to the calls and have shared information which we think might not have been shared otherwise. As we return to school normality, I think there are some much improved relationships between parents and staff [C771].*

*Sometimes just phoning a family and saying, 'Hey, you're doing a great job' has made a huge difference in enabling them to cope ... Parents/carers are so grateful for some affirmation ... I've had lots of tears of gratitude from these calls [C772].*

*I found supervision and the MyConcern webinars most supportive to my being able to keep a clear head and keep going forward safely [C779].*

*Simple ideas and a good chance to revolutionise the current educational model. SATs, Ofsted, narrow curriculum - what an opportunity in education to teach and work in a different way. This is a good time to rethink things. What's all the brouhaha about catching up? What about all the things that have been learnt at home? Catch up with who? Why not just modify the curriculum? [C844].*

## Reflexivity

This reflexivity section is included as a best-practice procedure in qualitative analyses. It is important to note that *Children's Services/Social Care (CSC)* did not participate in this particular session. This could introduce a potential for bias into the data.

Specifically, had CSC participated, their comments and responses in the conversations might have had two effects: i) they might have introduced positive comments that would have re-skewed data sufficiently to negate the negative tone of the *Children's Services/Social Care (CSC)* theme; ii) other participants might have been more reticent to make such overt criticisms of CSC. The former (i) is more likely than the latter (ii) because 10kV is designed to, and does, elicit very frank discussions due to the complete anonymity it affords participants (Eyre, Crego & Alison, 2008). If in future events, representatives from the CSC professions were to be invited this discussion would be given the opportunity to take place and the datasets could be compared.

## Key Takeaway Messages and Conclusion

1. 10kV debriefing is not a blame environment. However, there were several comments about engagement with Social Care. Children's Social Services/Care (CSC). having such a high threshold for response now that they are not seen to be responding to/active in safeguarding children.
2. Schools have been plugging the CSC gap during lockdown but this is unsustainable in long term: a) *Mental Health Impact* was a prominent theme (i.e., impact on staff as well as children/families); and b) *Increased Workload* also discussed adding further problems for safeguarders/educators.

### Next steps - how to address this gap and capitalise on the work done during lockdown.

3. *Relationships* are a positive takeaway. Creating better relationships with families by phoning/visiting them regularly, often with food as well as learning resources. Better with some agencies<sup>6</sup> too because 'all in it together' and online meetings are more efficient and thus effective. Good links made with local churches and charities. Sense of community is stronger.

### Next steps - how to facilitate this long term.

4. *Contact with Children* was a major theme - core to the efforts schools are making. There are many positives (e.g., in *Relationships* improved). It is possible that there is an over-emphasis on input (what was done) and little evidence of the evaluation of outcomes (did it work?). This potential under-evaluating, may well be masking greater problems, yet to become apparent post-lockdown. *Mental Health Impact* already emerged as a major theme. Together with too few evaluations, may well provide a prediction for increased demand on services that have already been undermined through austerity measures, pre-Covid19

### Next steps – plan for increased demand on services (CAMHS, family and criminal courts, Ed. Psychologists. schools, etc.)

5. *Domestic Abuse* (aka domestic violence/DV) was the theme that was predicted by the analysts' prior research in this safeguarding space, to be a significant theme. In fact, only 10 comments total, (all listed) were found in the data. The Police, refuge charities and NGOs, and other related DV services, have reported that lockdown has driven violence up. As a takeaway additional work needs now take place to make sense of this disparity. One possible explanation might be that Schools are not picking up on what they are clearly trying hard to achieve; *Contact* a big theme but so few references directly to DV may suggest an intelligence breakdown, especially in light of the increased DV reported elsewhere. This is linked to the evaluation of outcomes paragraph above, perhaps with more emphasis on evaluation i.e., less 'what we did' and more on 'outcomes' might

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<sup>6</sup> Notwithstanding some positive comments, for the most part, CSC an exception here.

make available more intelligence on DV and be of tremendous intelligence value to other agencies.

**Next steps - as per 4. above, plan for higher demand on domestic abuse and related services.**

6. *ICT Issues* a major theme. There is a big assumption students can just 'go online' to learn. In light of the issues raised in the data relating to the significant difficulties poorer families have in accessing both IT and the restrictions they have on the volume of data contained within their existing contracts with internet providers raises 'Tech poverty' and the lack of or inadequate access to ICT as a big issue. It is worthy of note that the data describes innovative and engaging solutions to these problems and this learning needs to be widely disseminated.

**Next steps - a) Establish how much learning missed by disadvantaged children and young people; b) plan for equipment/devices and online access for equitable access to education and other online public services.**

It is customary to end 10kV reports with the voice of the participants rather than the authors/analysts. In a comment that straddled several themes of *Vulnerability, Safeguarding, Mental Health Impact, Return and Next Steps, Social Services*, they made a plea for their considerable professional expertise to be listened to and acted upon:

***"This is not going to finish in September for safeguarding. It will continue for years as we pick up the pieces of what's happened. Social Services need the funding and support to help the families hit by this. Our children need help in place, not just promised, but actual. They need to see that people other than their school, care. If not, we're going to have children grow up with issues that extend far into their adult life. We can help them. Let us [C896]."***



## Glossary

ASD - Autism Spectrum Disorder

CIN – Child in Need

CAMHS – Children and Health Mental Health Services

CP – Child Protection

DFE – Department for Education

DSL – Designated Safeguarding Lead

DV – Domestic Violence

EHCP – Educational and Health Care Plan

FSM – Free School Meals

LA – Local Authority

MAT – Multi Academy Trust

MH – Mental Health

RAG – Red, Amber, Green (marking)

SC – Social Care

SEND – Special Educational Needs and Disability

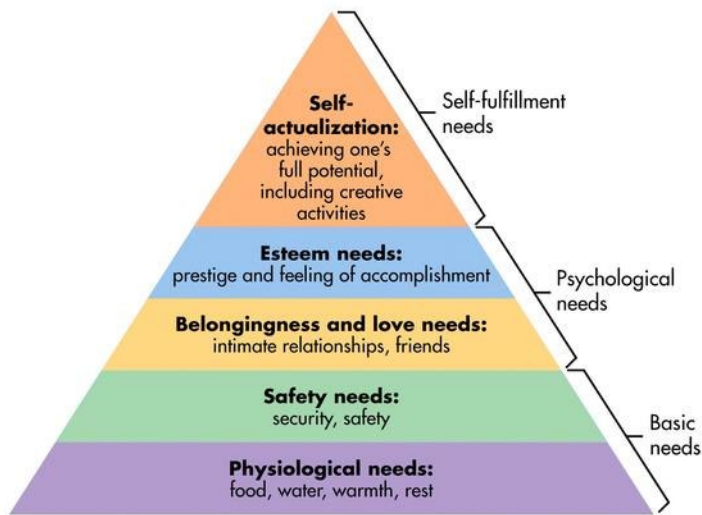
SENDCo – Special Educational Needs and Disability Co-ordinator

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## Appendix

Figure 2. Maslow's (1943) Hierarchy of Human Need.



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END OF REPORT