Navigating the complex challenges

within a whole-school approach

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SESSION AIMS

Today will be a high-level overview.

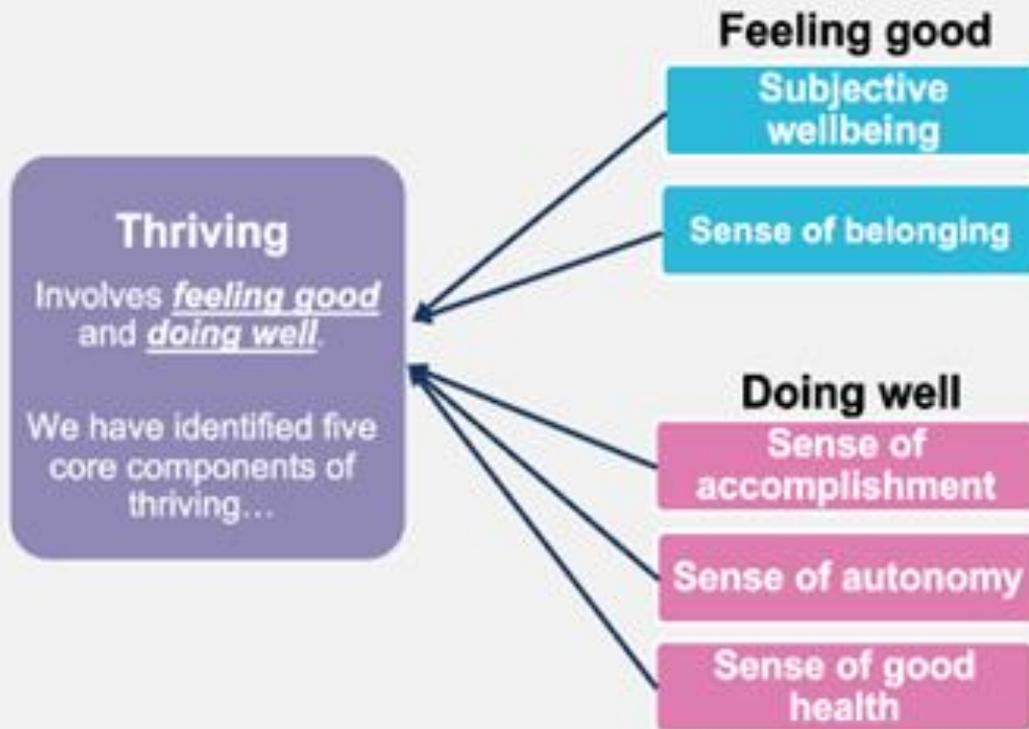**The 3 key themes that we will explore today include:**

- Strategic leadership challenges to safeguarding.
- Understanding need, risk, & intervention.
- Building capacity to safeguard effectively.

MISSION DRIVEN GOVERNMENT

Opportunity Mission

1. Best start in life
2. Every child achieving and thriving
3. Skills for opportunity and growth
4. Family security

EVERY CHILD ACHIEVING AND THRIVING

Feeling good
- Subjective wellbeing
- Sense of belonging

Thriving
Involves *feeling good* and *doing well*.

We have identified five core components of thriving...

Doing well
- Sense of accomplishment
- Sense of autonomy
- Sense of good health

- Evidence, expert and sector voices agree that achieving & thriving are not in conflict – on the contrary!

- Thriving (overall), and key components (such as school belonging and inclusive practice for ALL), can be key **mutually reinforcing enablers of attainment and school attendance**

- Supporting all young people to thrive can therefore be an important part of **driving high and rising standards** in every school and **increasing pupil attendance** levels.

WHAT YOUNG PEOPLE NEED

Schools to take a **preventative approach** to support

Regular contact with a **trusted and relatable adult** at school

Robust **mental health support**

Adults to prioritise understanding the **root causes** of behaviour

To feel **heard**

To feel a sense of **agency** and be **included in decision-making** processes

Holistic support that connects their wider environment

Positive relationships with teachers

STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP CHALLENGES IN SAFEGUARDING

Key strategic safeguarding leadership challenges in schools:

1. The nature of the leadership role
2. Capacity and resource
3. Interconnectedness of systems and services that support children and young people
4. Well placed, not well resourced

1. NATURE OF LEADERSHIP ROLE

- Dual/Multi-role – most leaders wear multiple hats.

- Time pressures – corresponds with dual/multi-role.

- Wellbeing – type of, and amount of, pressure on school leaders has increased.

- Training – lack of high-quality training and mentoring that is reflective of the role available.

- Capacity – high workload.

2. CAPACITY & RESOURCE

- Shrinking LA resource – schools pick up the tab.

- 'Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility' – but in reality, it's not, is it?

- We can only ensure DSLs have the capacity and resource to support those most in need if the burden of safeguarding is shared across the whole school.

- We must begin to think strategically about DSL workload – and what that may mean for the safeguarding role and responsibilities of the wider workforce.

- HT and DSL turnover has accelerated – do 'new' DSLs have the requisite knowledge and competence to lead safeguarding? What about DSL recruitment?

3. INTERCONNECTEDNESS OF SYSTEMS & SERVICES

- LA budget constraints have led to a focus on S47 & S17, the role of other agencies is being emphasised in relation to providing early help.

- Academisation of schools nationally has led to some core safeguarding tensions between LAs and Schools – the LA Education Safeguarding offer is shrinking.

- The child protection system is built around a legislative framework intended to protect children whose parents are harming them or failing to protect them – schools are responding to an ever-growing number of extrafamilial harms too.

- The Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel *STILL* continue to cite a lack of timely and accurate information sharing as a key reason why significant harm goes undetected.

4. WELL PLACED, NOT WELL RESOURCED

- Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023) updated guidance in relation to the role of the lead professional and children supported under S17 of the Children Act (1989) – can we expect even more to be pushed towards schools?

- School *can be* huge protective factor for children and young people but the role of schools in safeguarding is changing faster than schools are adapting.

- The core function of education is to educate, and to prepare children for adulthood by enabling them to grow and develop into healthy and safe functioning adults – keeping them safe is the very foundation of this.
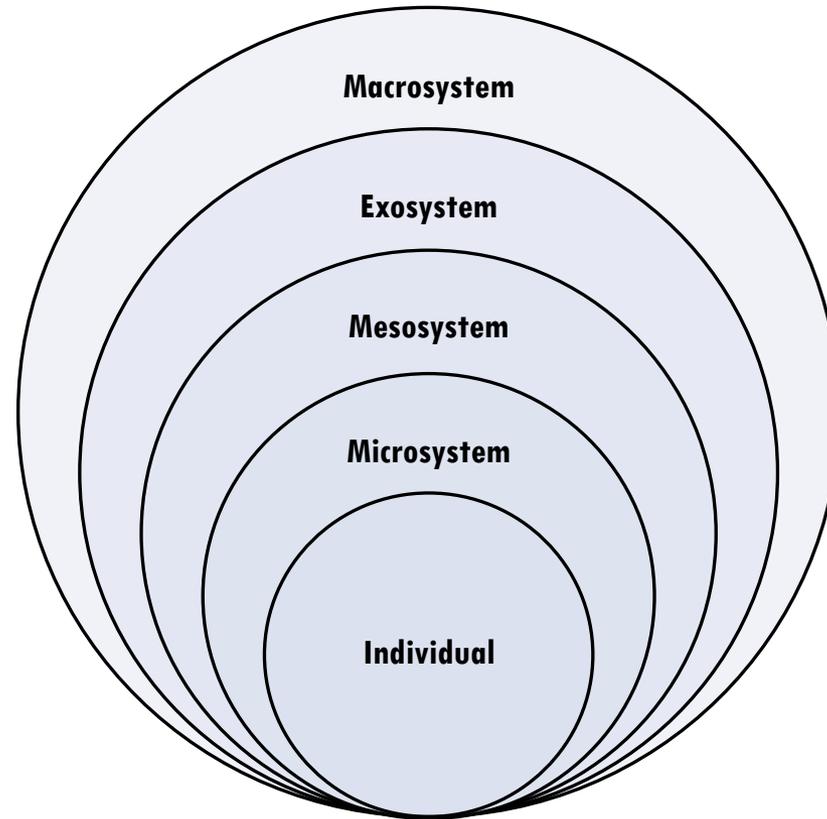
RISK & INTERVENTION

- Support and intervention plans are not always reflective of the risk identified.

- Children and young people can be at risk of harm from others, to others, or to self – we tend to see schools focus on the 'from others' part more than the others.

- Risks to children and young people continue to emerge – we are constantly trying to adapt to new threats of harm.

- Micro vs Macro intervention – do we need holistic and systemic intervention?

BROFENBRENNER'S (1981) ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS THEORY

Mesosystem – home, school, neighbourhood, clubs, groups.

Macrosystem – laws, values, culture, beliefs, economics, DfE.

Exosystem – local council, parents' workplace, media, social care.

Macrosystem

Exosystem

Mesosystem

Microsystem

Individual

Microsystem – Peers, siblings, school staff, pupils, parents, carers.

Matt

Age 11

Dad – Director of an IT Company
Mum – Home maker

Siblings – Louise 4yrs, Angus 15yrs

Attendance – 94%

Attainment – achieving expected targets

Engagement – Both parents attend parents'
evenings, school plays, sports events etc. Mum
never attends by herself

Matt is quiet, reserved and has few friends.

Microsystem: Home

Operation Encompass Notification:

Domestic Abuse incident at the home, on investigation this is a persistent issue.

All three children are witness to the incidents.

The history taken by the police shows that this has been happening for several years

How might the DA incidents affect Matt's perception of:
- Men
- Women
- Relationships
- The Police

Incident on the way to school:

Argument between a group of students including Matt in the Tesco Express Near to school.

Matt was physically escorted out of the shop by the Security Guard

Microsystem: Home

Mesosystem: Community

How might the DA incidents affect Matt's perception of:

- People in authority
- Adults
- Other pupils

Matt arrives late:

He is given a detention for being late, gives some back chat to the reception staff and storms into the classroom.

Huffing, puffing and muttering under his breath he refuses to answer questions or contribute to his lessons.

He is sent out of the classroom until he can participate politely.

Microsystem: Home

Mesosystem: Community

Mesosystem: School

How might the DA incidents affect Matt's perception of:

- Male Teachers
- Female Teachers
- People in authority

THE IMPORTANCE OF CONTEXT – AN EXAMPLE

Presenting Issue – the child is not attending school.

Response – strategies to facilitate the child's return to school.

Have we considered push and pull factors between home, school and neighbourhood settings?

Have we determined the child's places of risk and safety?

Have we considered what the child needs to 'be' safe and to 'feel' safe?

The same presenting issues could mean;

A) A child not in school as they are pushed out of school due to bullying.

B) A child not in school as they are pulled toward the neighbourhood due to exploitation.

C) A child not in school as they are pulled towards home due to a caring responsibility.

A victim of bullying or exploitation, and the needs of a young carer require 3 very different interventions – so how can we respond effectively if we don't look beyond the presenting issue?

INTERCONNECTEDNESS OF SYSTEMS & STAKEHOLDERS

Key questions that to put to your leadership team:

- What does safeguarding look like in each system & context?

- Who are the key stakeholders?

- What is the role of our school in facilitating the interconnectedness of these systems and stakeholders?

- How can we be more creative and imaginative with our safeguarding responses to affect change beyond the school gates?

TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT

- By re-thinking and re-designing our approaches to teacher training we have an opportunity to make safeguarding everyone's responsibility a reality – the more skilled the wider staff team are, the more capacity for the DSL.

- Better training and development of the wider workforce supports with earlier identification of need, lower escalation of need, and more protected time for DSLs to focus on S17 and S47.

- Safeguarding must be proactive – we need holistic and systemic interventions and offers that address the societal challenges affecting children, young people, and families.

RE-THINKING THE ROLE OF THE DSL

- It is incredibly difficult to plan the capacity needed for a safeguarding team within a school when we are still unclear about the role.

- The DSL role varies enormously from one setting to the next, the level of responsibility is not equal for all DSLs.

- KCSiE provides guidance (ever growing guidance) but it isn't overly reflective of the role.

- Primary Schools, Secondary Schools, LA Maintained Schools and Academies all have their own unique challenges in how staff and personnel are structured to enable effective safeguarding.