

REPORT ON CONFERENCE FOR LSCB WEBSITE

The Redbridge Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) held a conference with a difference in April. Instead of the Board agreeing the theme and programme as is the norm, participants from the LSCB Youth Forum made that decision for us!



"As always ... very impressed with the Youth Forum."

What came about was an excellent event in which young people spoke very clearly about the safeguarding issues that concern them in their daily lives. In particular, they spoke of the constant pressures of peer on peer sexual harassment and inappropriate sexualised behaviour. Attendance at the event included over 30 young people and 80 professionals, from across a wide range of agencies working with children, young people and their families or carers in Redbridge.

The audience was treated to a film entitled "In your face, in your space", produced specifically for the event by the Youth Forum, which highlighted concerns around inappropriate and unwelcome sexual behaviour.



There were some strong messages from the young people. Not all feel they are able to speak freely at home about the issues of sex and relationships that concern them. Some young people want and need an adult outside of their family circle that they can trust to speak to about relationships. They

actually want boundaries put in place and upheld to protect them from unwanted sexual behaviour. The ability to report sexual harassment anonymously was advocated and also that messages should be sent to school leaderships via School Councils that sexual harassment will not be tolerated.



It was clear that young people want information and support around keeping their bodies safe, developing resilience to peer pressure, and signposting to help lines. One great suggestion was for a poster or infographic to be produced showing 'acceptable behaviour' and 'unacceptable behaviour'.

Whilst social media is appreciated as a fantastic mode of communication, some of the young people shared that they had concerns about making "mistakes" that could compromise their safety and also stay with them for a long time – such as 'sharing' explicit photos on-line. Things like this can quickly things go viral!

Another warning that was raised was the potential for stereotyping by professionals – such as always assuming that boys sexually intimidate girls and not the other way around. This was illustrated well in the film.

A very specific message was a call for sex education to be less focused on biology and contraception, and more focused on positive relationships and consent.

Alongside sexual harassment, young people expressed that another important safeguarding concern was mental health – particularly exam stress and self-harming. We heard that not all young people knew how to access help and support with these issues.

Ultimately, it was very clear from the presentations and table discussions at the conference that young people want a culture which is open, supportive and non-judgemental – one that allows them to share safely about very sensitive issues and get the support they need.

Some young people advocated a 'curriculum for life' through PHSE (personal, social, health and economic) lessons in school which can include various topics that young people need to consider as they are becoming adult. It was suggested that schools consider using external facilitators who have specialist knowledge and skills e.g. voluntary/community groups as young people may be more open with people that they don't have to face every day.

Young people that have behaved sexually inappropriately need to be set clear boundaries so that they understand at what point sexual harassment starts to happen, with this backed up by policies and procedures.

Society and the media provide the image that sexualised behaviour is acceptable and the 'norm' but it can be damaging for young people. The message needs to be reinforced by adults that they have the right to say 'No' to things that impact them, including sex, and to accept that if another young person says no – they mean it and should be respected.

The Conference also featured a presentation (available via the website) by Robert Lamb from the [Redbridge Autism Ambassadors](#) on safeguarding issues for young people with disabilities which was very relevant to the current [priorities](#) of the LSCB.



"It was very interesting to hear the youth perspective and to meet such confident, passionate young people."


"I took away with me learning around being mindful about what I said to a young person the next day."

Summing up the really rich mix of conversations, messages and feedback from the event if difficult, however, this comment, made by a young person, has really stuck with me *"On sex and relationships, the only people I can talk to are my friends and really is another 15 year old going to be the best person to give me advice!"* So as adults working with children and young people on the issue of sex

and relationships - we need to be available, listen, inform, be pro-active, set clear boundaries, and ultimately protect.

If you attended the conference, I hope you found it as informative as I did. If you were not able to join us on the day, we are planning to link the young people's film to the LSCB website later in the summer so do check back.

Finally, heartfelt thank you to all those young people that really made the event and to the professionals that attended and listened. This is really just the beginning of a journey that the LSCB and its partner agencies need to make to ensure that the feedback from the conference informs our future planning, learning and development activities and most importantly, practice.



"As a result of a discussion at the Conference, I was able to help a young person with their Access to Records application."

Lesley Perry

LSCB Business Manager