

Education Committee, 5 February 2019

## **Recording and Monitoring Bullying in Schools Phase 2 Operational Support Group Meeting 17 December 2018 – Notes**

**Neil Morrison 21/12/18**

Deputy First Minister putting a high priority on this and publicity has led to interest and plaudits from elsewhere including an international audience. All schools to be in by session 2019/20. There have also been FOI requests around readiness and use of the system though not many yet. Inspectors to check progress. Respect for All document was heavily referenced and schools and local authorities were advised to be familiar with this <http://respectme.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/RESPECT-FOR-ALL-FINAL.pdf> It was also recommended that policy and practice be reviewed in light of this and the requirements of the module if they had not already been. This was advised as LA policy followed by review at school of practices.

Phase 2 local authorities (which Aberdeenshire are) need all schools to be up and running with the system by 28 January 2019. From this date schools will be asked to show evidence of use. If Aberdeenshire confirm Phase 2 then inspectors will ask to see the evidence of monitoring in any inspections via the module rather than any school system currently operating. It appears to be all in at one time, across all sectors. Local Authority reps were asked to confirm readiness. Several at the meeting were not ready and were advised to go to Phase 3.

There is a GLOW page with some helpful information and links however it is not heavily populated yet and doesn't have much that would really aid schools starting with the module. It will feature a core narrative which is being developed to give consistency around FOIs and likely increases in recording. This should be available in the New Year.

### **Policy and practice**

Revised policy and practice statements were viewed as essential and need to include clear advice on use of the SEEMIS module. A key element was a definition of what constituted bullying and so what would be recorded. Advice on how to complete the various fields and responses was advised so that consistency was in place at authority level then within schools. A local authority monitoring process is required to flag up patterns. Some authorities do this weekly apparently. My understanding is that Aberdeenshire does not have up to date policy and practice statements at present and would be advised to do so before implementation. This would mean delaying until Phase 3.

## **Training**

This was seen as essential for SLT and Guidance but not necessary for most staff though they would need awareness and up to date policy so they knew about it. Training is primarily a guide and video but it is the nuts and bolts of SEEMIS and doesn't get into variables or case examples so this needs to be addressed at local level. Workload issues seemed to vary and were possibly linked to readiness. Once it was fully up and running it was claimed that it helps workload but initially some found an increase. Many users in Phase 1 and Phase 2 have their own spreadsheets and other recording tools so it removes that work but needs an initial input to overcome that. RespectMe charity have worked with a number of local authorities and are keen to extend that work. I spoke to the lady concerned who has worked with Aberdeenshire in the past but not recently. Her advice was for a local authority that has not updated policy and practice to do the revisions and go for Phase 3 so that it was done well. There did not appear to be any impediment to a local authority doing this.

Primaries are better to use Pastoral Notes or the only info pulled through to secondary is bullying which then looks negative and other issues around the child are missed. The meeting noted many primaries do not use SEEMIS Pastoral Notes and this is the case in Aberdeenshire.

There were issues in recording unfounded allegations, but I didn't know enough about the module to understand this area. This perhaps exemplified the training need which is unmet as yet in some local authorities and does not feature in the SEEMIS training which is concerned with the mechanics of the form and not real life examples.

Some confusion has occurred with who it is recording bullying for. It was stressed it is Peer to Peer and not a tool to record bullying of staff.

## **Issues**

State of readiness in a given local authority. Before implementation there is a clear need for policy and practice review considering the Respect for All document and the requirements of the module. All users and schools will need to be aware that inspections will specifically ask for information from the module and if schools are not using it after their local authority has agreed to phasing then they will be pulled up. If schools are not ready with trained staff they will be left exposed.

State of readiness in Aberdeenshire. I'm unclear where all schools are in terms of their readiness, but I believe not all are ready to roll out the module in February. My DHT Pupil Support asked her 16 colleagues what stage they were at. She only received one reply and they are not ready for implementation. A further trawl has elicited that at least 3 Academies are up and running. I have asked several primary colleagues and none are ready to roll out the module and several were unaware of it. There is a potential issue with only a limited number of primaries using Pastoral Notes as Notes and the Module should be used together.

As far as I can ascertain there is no planned training and no plan to update policy and practice.

My own team are aware of the module but not using it yet. We plan to though we would want an updated local authority policy. Our reason for implementation is we do not currently monitor bullying incidents so would be found wanting in an inspection. If schools go their own way then there is potential for wide recording variations. Forthcoming Area days might be an opportunity to raise awareness /check readiness/train but these are soon and there is no current plan to incorporate the topic.

In terms of workload and tackling bureaucracy it was hard to gauge the impact from the meeting however there is definitely a spike in time required at the outset due to the need to revise policy and practice, train staff and work through the practicalities of implementation and scenarios.

If Aberdeenshire go ahead in Phase 2 and all schools are not using it then any that are inspected will be at risk of being criticised. This would be unacceptable and place unnecessary pressure on staff.

I contacted the Head of Service to ask who the Local Authority lead was and to flag up the issues above. The lead is Kat Burke who is a Health Improvement Officer. The HofS asked I pass my concerns to her I have advised her of these and await a reply.

Neil Morrison January 2019