



# **ISLE OF WIGHT SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD**

## **COMMUNICATIONS PROTOCOL**

**APRIL 2014**

Version 1	Ratified:	
	Review Date:	

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The Isle of Wight Safeguarding Children Board (IOWSCB) brings together representatives from agencies and organisations on the Isle of Wight who have a statutory responsibility to work in partnership to protect the Island's children and young people. It has a range of groups which meet to take forward its business objectives. These are reviewed and agreed each year, with membership drawn from all partner agencies.
- 1.2 Occasionally, when a child dies or is seriously injured and abuse or neglect is suspected, the Board has to commission a serious case review. The findings of this need to be communicated to all those most closely involved, (including the family and staff involved with the family) and also to those individuals and organisations who hold agencies on the Isle of Wight to account, to ensure transparency and openness in the IOWSCB's dealings.
- 1.3 It is important that people understand how the IOWSCB works and the fact that agencies work together closely and effectively to ensure children and young people's protection and safety. To this end, the IOWSCB will seek to engage with local stakeholders and the media to ensure wider understanding of safeguarding on the Isle of Wight. It will aim to ensure that any publicity describing policies, aims, decisions and review results is objective, concentrates on the facts and explanations and promotes clearly what the IOWSCB aims to achieve for the children and young people of the Isle of Wight.
- 1.4 The IOWSCB will always consider the sensitivity of personal health or social care issues when discussing individual cases and will only refer to information that is already in the public domain.

## **2 Scope**

- 2.1 The following protocols apply to members and staff of all IOWSCB partner organisations, schools, governors and elected members.

## **3 Working Protocols**

- 3.1 It is understood that agencies and organisations will manage their own communications on daily operational issues relating to safeguarding. This means that individuals, service areas, agencies or organisations may produce or issue press releases or make press statements as part of their organisational response to

safeguarding. When an IOWSCB agency is dealing with an operational issue they will aim to notify other agencies in the partnership who may also be affected by the issue.

- 3.2 When a case involves more than one agency and it is likely to attract media attention or a serious case review has been undertaken, or has been commissioned or is being considered by the IOWSCB, a communications plan will be produced with contributions from all agencies involved.
- 3.3 The communications plan will be initiated through a teleconference between, as a minimum, the communications leads for serious case reviews at Isle of Wight Council (IWC), Hampshire Constabulary and NHS Isle of Wight (and its successors) and a representative from the IOWSCB Business Unit. This will be arranged by the IOWSCB Business Unit at least 2 weeks before the IOWSCB Executive considers the final case review report. This report will be shared in advance with each of the communication leads who will be part of the teleconference.
- 3.4 The outcome of the teleconference will be to agree the list of stakeholders for this serious case review, the approach to handling communications with each of them, timeline, key messages and next steps. The media will be one of the stakeholders considered. This will then be developed by the IWC communications lead into a draft communications plan for sharing with the other agencies. Once agreed, this communications plan will be recommended to the IOWSCB Executive as part of their consideration of the review report.
- 3.5 All agencies involved in the respective issues will support the IOWSCB Chair in agreeing press releases and preparing for interviews. This will be co-ordinated by the IWC Press Office on behalf of the IOWSCB.

#### **4 Working protocols for dealing with the media**

- 4.1 The IWC press office will coordinate all media responses on behalf of the IOWSCB unless otherwise agreed as part of the communications plan. Individual agencies will speak to the IWC press office before speaking to any media agency, radio or television station about any serious case review.
- 4.2 Press releases, written or verbal comments, organisation of press conferences or events, placing new items on web sites or the issuing of publications or advertising in relation to such cases or matters referred to in paragraph 3.2 above will be co-ordinated by the IWC press office on behalf of the IOWSCB.

- 4.3 All local, national and trade/professional press calls will be routed through the IWC press office. One telephone number for all initial press enquiries will be used.
- 4.4 If the issue related to an ongoing police investigation into criminal offences then the Hampshire Constabulary media team will advise the IWC press office of the police media strategy.
- 4.5 When an enquiry comes into the IWC press office, which relates to the work of one of the IOWSCB member agencies, the IWC press office will log the enquiry and pass the details to the appropriate communications lead in the other organisation.
- 4.6 The IOWSCB will not comment directly on information provided to the press anonymously or comment on quotes that cannot be attributed. However, the appropriate agency will investigate enquiries and give the context and the background in its response.
- 4.7 If the media is materially inaccurate in its reporting, the IWC press office will work with the IOWSCB and partner communication leads as appropriate to supply a correction or take other appropriate action (such as a letter to the editor).
- 4.8 All news releases and statements will be clearly headed 'Isle of Wight Safeguarding Children Board' with the partner logos displayed appropriately.
- 4.9 A position statement will be included with each press release explaining the role of the IOWSCB.
- 4.10 For urgent press enquiries which fall outside the prepared statements, releases and Questions and Answers, the IWC press office will contact the Chair of the Board to agree a response, failing that then a member of the IOWSCB Executive best placed to assist in the response. It should not be agreed by managers who sit outside the IOWSCB with no experience of safeguarding issues.
- 4.11 The Chair of the Board will be approached in the first instance for interviews on safeguarding issues, with the Chair calling upon representatives of the partner agencies to assist as they see fit.

## **5 Working Protocols for managing communications with wider stakeholders**

- 5.1 The IOWSCB Business Unit will co-ordinate communication and contact with wider stakeholders leading up to and after publication of any case review reports, this will include, but is not exclusive to:

- a) The Family
- b) The author and independent chair of the review (where appropriate)
- c) Department for Education
- d) Department of Health
- e) Agencies supporting the family (for example, school, foster carers, GP)
- f) Elected Members and District Managers
- g) IOWSCB Members

5.2 The IOWSCB Learning and Development sub group will consider and recommend to the IOWSCB Executive how the learning from each case review can best be disseminated. An implementation plan will be developed and overseen by the IOWSCB Business Unit.