



This guidance was developed as part of the  
London C&F Project

## **Local Safeguarding Children Board Strategy for engaging with minority ethnic culture and faith (often socially excluded) communities, groups and families to safeguard their children**

**‘Community-led approaches to promoting  
child safeguarding are needed, they have been  
shown to be critical in engaging socially  
excluded communities; and in changing  
attitudes and behaviour’**

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from *Safeguarding Children’s Rights Special Initiative: Final Evaluation Report*, (Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust / University of East London Centre for Social Work Research, 2011)

## Acknowledgements

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Barnet, Bexley, Brent, Enfield, Greenwich, Hackney,  
Haringey, Merton, Newham, Sutton, Tower Hamlets

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## Contents

<b>1. Introduction .....</b>	<b>4</b>
1.1 Purpose of this strategy and intended audience .....	4
1.2 Pan London Safeguarding Children Minority Ethnic Culture and Faith Project.....	4
1.3 London's population profile .....	6
1.4 Terminology .....	6
<b>2. LSCB responsibilities .....</b>	<b>7</b>
2.1 LSCB functions and reporting requirements .....	7
<b>3. Development of a minority ethnic culture and faith engagement strategy .....</b>	<b>7</b>
3.1 Minority ethnic culture and faith sub-group .....	7
3.2 Framework for action .....	7
<b>4. Engaging minority ethnic culture and faith groups and communities .....</b>	<b>9</b>
4.1 Community partnership model .....	9
4.2 Developing the model .....	9
4.3 Benefits from implementing the model.....	10
<b>5. Capacity building in minority ethnic culture and faith groups and communities to safeguard children .....</b>	<b>10</b>
5.1 The Safeguarding Children's Rights Initiative .....	10
<b>6. Training and community education .....</b>	<b>12</b>
6.1 <i>London C&amp;F Training Toolkit</i> .....	12
6.2 LSCB responsibilities .....	12

In this strategy guidance, the term 'ethnic groups and communities' describes those with a common heritage, ancestry, language, faith and/or culture<sup>2</sup>

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Purpose of this strategy and intended audience

1.1.1 This LSCB strategy seeks to assist Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs) to develop sound, effective and sustainable partnership working with local groups, communities and third sector agencies to protect and promote the wellbeing of children living in circumstances which appear to be complex because their faith, culture, nationality and possibly recent history differs significantly from that of host nation children and families.

1.1.2 This strategy must be read in conjunction with the London Practice Guidance for Safeguarding Children in Minority Ethnic Culture and Faith (often socially excluded) Communities, Groups and Families (London Board, 2011) – referred to here as the *London C&F Practice Guidance*.

1.1.3 A key recommendation from the London Community Partnership Project was that partnership with local communities and faith groups needs to be sustained and promoted across London as a means of developing communities' capacity for promoting their own cohesion and integration into London society<sup>3</sup>.

### 1.2 Pan London Safeguarding Children Minority Ethnic Culture and Faith Project

1.2.1 This strategy is part of a larger London Safeguarding Children Board project: the Pan London Safeguarding Children Minority Ethnic Culture and Faith Project 2010-2011 (referred to throughout as the *London C&F project*). The *London C&F project* was an action-research project which aimed to promote a step-change in safeguarding London's children living in minority ethnic, cultural or faith communities or groups, working together with local minority ethnic communities and faith groups and the frontline professionals who work with them.

1.2.2 The *London C&F project* ran for 18 months from July 2010 to December 2011, and was co-ordinated by the London Safeguarding Children Board and LB Bexley. Project activity was overseen by an operational steering group with membership from London LSCBs and specialist third sector agencies.

1.2.3 The project comprised three parts:

1. Project work with minority ethnic culture or faith communities / groups by 11 London local safeguarding children boards (LSCBs);
2. Focus groups in a number of London LSCBs to gather views on how to improve safeguarding for London's children living in minority ethnic groups and communities;
3. Interviews with a number of London LSCBs, mapping activity and aspiration for stronger partnership work to safeguard children living in minority ethnic, culture or faith communities or groups.

1.2.4 Project outputs include:

- a. This *London C&F LSCB Strategy*;

<sup>2</sup>Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983), *The Invention of Tradition*, Sider 1993 *Lumbee Indian Histories*; Seidner,(1982), *Ethnicity, Language, and Power from a Psycholinguistic Perspective*, pp. 2-3; and Smith 1987 pp.21-22

<sup>3</sup> *Community Partnership Project Report* (London Board, 2007)

- b. A final project report, drawing together learning from each of the individual LSCB projects, focus groups and interviews;
- c. A *London C&F Training Toolkit*, which aims to ensure that professionals and voluntary groups working with minority ethnic culture and faith communities, groups and families have access to a wide range of resources, materials and background information to help them develop and design appropriate and sensitive training packages in relation to child protection in its broadest sense; and
- d. The *London C&F Practice Guidance*, which has been developed to assist clear insight and effective action to protect and promote the welfare of children living in circumstances which appear to be complex because their faith, culture, nationality and possibly recent history differs significantly from that of host nation children and families.

1.2.5 All outputs from the project are available at: [www.londonscb.gov.uk/culture\\_and\\_faith/](http://www.londonscb.gov.uk/culture_and_faith/)

#### **Key themes**

- 1.2.6 Key themes from the *London C&F Project* centre on the core need to build trust between local minority ethnic culture and faith communities, groups and families and statutory services. For trust to flourish, professionals need to better understand these communities and faith groups, reducing incidents of stereotyping and increasing professionals' confidence to challenge cultural and faith-related practices which give rise to safeguarding children concerns.
- 1.2.7 Local faith leaders are powerful, and it can be difficult for followers to challenge them. Individuals may also be concerned not to bring shame on their community or group by reporting safeguarding issues. These leaders need to be positively engaged, and individuals who have fears need more assurance that confidentiality issues are managed with transparency and integrity.
- 1.2.8 Minority ethnic groups and communities need greater awareness and education about UK children's legislation, the role and responsibilities of local statutory services and their powers and duties (e.g. to provide support) towards children and their families.

#### **Framework of competencies**

1.2.9 The *London C&F Practice Guidance* sets out a framework of competencies for effective safeguarding children practice. These are based on professionals being competent in:

- Knowing how a healthy child or young person presents and behaves – so that the professional can recognise signs of distress and impaired development and intervene as early as possible to protect and promote wellbeing;
- Listening to children and taking what they say seriously – so that their distress can be acted on quickly and appropriately;
- Knowing how to undertake a really good holistic assessment. Depending on the circumstances the assessment can be brief or in-depth, but it must address all three Assessment Framework domains in order not to miss a key factor;
- Cultural competence – so that the professional is self-aware enough not to alienate the child or family and avoids being blinded or prejudiced by faith or cultural practices (and loses sight of harm or potential harm to the child);
- Knowing, learning about or seeking expert advice on the particular culture and/or faith by which the child and family lives their daily life;
- Knowing what services are available locally to provide relevant cultural and faith-related input to prevention, support and rehabilitation services for the child (and their family)

### 1.3 London's population profile

1.3.1 The *London C&F Practice Guidance* also provides information about the profile of minority ethnic diversity in London, as well as information about newly immigrant communities, population mobility and child poverty. Child poverty is included as a significant factor in the *London C&F Practice Guidance* and should form part of any LSCB strategy because there is a strong link between poverty and harm to children through neglect and abuse. Within Black or Black British households in the UK, 48% of children are living in poverty – compared with 27% of White children<sup>4</sup>.

### 1.4 Terminology

1.4.1 The terms in this strategy conform to those set out in the London Child Protection Procedures<sup>5</sup>. In particular, 'child' is defined as children up to their 18th birthday, and a 'professional' as any individual working in a voluntary, employed, professional or unqualified capacity, including foster carers and approved adopters. 'Parents' refers to parents and carers.

1.4.2 'Ethnicity' refers to a group of people whose members identify with each other through a common heritage, such as a common language, culture (often including a shared religion) and ideology that stresses common ancestry and/or endogamy (the practice of marrying within a specific ethnic group, class, or social group)<sup>6</sup>.

1.4.3 A 'minority' is a sociological group which does not make up a dominant majority in terms of social status, education, employment, wealth and political power.

1.4.4 The term 'safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children' is defined as:

- Protecting children from maltreatment
- Preventing impairment of children's health or development
- Ensuring that children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care
- Enabling children to have optimum life chances and enter adulthood successfully

1.4.5 **Culture** can be understood as the social heritage of a group, organised community or society. It is a pattern of responses discovered, developed or invented during the group's history of handling problems which arise from interactions among its members, and between them and their environment. These responses are considered the correct way to perceive, feel, think, and act, and are passed on to the new members through immersion and teaching. Culture determines what is acceptable or unacceptable, important or unimportant, right or wrong, workable or unworkable. It encompasses all learned and shared, explicit or tacit, assumptions, beliefs, knowledge, norms and values, as well as attitudes, behaviour, dress, and language.

1.4.6 **Faith** is a belief system which forms attitudes and behaviours but crucially informs one's identity over a period of time. It can be understood as 'spirituality' – defined as searching for purpose, meaning and morality, which can often, but not always, be expressed as a 'religion' – which includes regular public worship such as church attendance. Although in 2006, 31% of the host country population said they belonged to a religion or attended religious

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<sup>4</sup>NSPCC Poverty and child maltreatment (Research briefing April 2008); Hooper et al (2007); see also Cawson et al.(2000) and Cawson (2002)

<sup>5</sup> See the *London Child Protection Procedures* (London Safeguarding Children Board, 2010) at [www.londonscb.gov.uk/procedures/](http://www.londonscb.gov.uk/procedures/)

<sup>6</sup>Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983), *The Invention of Tradition*, Sider 1993 *Lumbee Indian Histories*; Seidner,(1982), *Ethnicity, Language, and Power from a Psycholinguistic Perspective*, pp. 2-3; and Smith 1987 pp.21-22

services<sup>7</sup>, church attendance has increasingly been replaced by individualised and privatised religious practices and beliefs.

## 2. LSCB responsibilities

### 2.1 LSCB functions and reporting requirements

- 2.1.1 The detail of LSCB functions is set out in section 18 of the *London Child Protection Procedures* (London Board, 2010). The LSCB is the key statutory mechanism for co-ordinating, monitoring and supporting relevant agencies in each local area to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in that locality, and for ensuring the effectiveness of what they do.
- 2.1.2 LSCBs focus on safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in three broad areas of activity:
- activity that affects all children and aims to identify and prevent maltreatment, or impairment of health or development, and ensure children are growing up in circumstances consistent with safe and effective care;
  - proactive safeguarding and promotion of wellbeing for particular groups (e.g. children in need and their families, and children who are potentially more vulnerable than the general population);
  - responsive work to protect children who are suffering, or at risk of suffering harm.

## 3. Development of a minority ethnic culture and faith engagement strategy

### 3.1 Minority ethnic culture and faith sub-group

3.1.1 Each LSCB may want to give consideration to how an engagement strategy could be developed, drafted and implemented. This could be, for example, by setting up a minority ethnic culture and faith subgroup, or alternatively by identifying a 'Champion' with responsibility for informing and implementing the LSCB's work relating to the co-ordination of service provision for, and engagement with, local minority ethnic culture and faith groups and communities. At a strategic level, this subgroup or champion could also assist with equality impact assessments when new services are introduced, and contribute to commissioning arrangements.

3.1.2 A key finding from the London Community Partnership Project is that successful engagement depends largely on a respectful and culturally sensitive approach, rather than on the ethnicity and cultural / religious background of the outreach workers<sup>8</sup>

### 3.2 Framework for action

3.2.1 There are six steps which the sub-group can follow to facilitate development and implementation of an effective strategy to promote and monitor the safety and wellbeing of children in local minority ethnic culture and faith communities, groups and families.

<sup>7</sup> British Social Attitudes survey 2006 (National Centre for Social Research 2007)

<sup>8</sup> *London Community Partnership Project* (London Board, 2007)

3.2.2 LSCBs may find that creative use of existing partnerships will be helpful in progressing this work (e.g. joint work with local voluntary sector umbrella organisation or multi-faith forum, where available).

3.2.3 The steps are:

1. Mapping:

- local minority ethnic culture and faith groups and communities, including settled and new immigrant communities, supplementary schools, faith groups and transient populations e.g. travellers;
- what statutory and third sector services are currently used by these groups and communities and the outcomes/satisfactions levels;
- the accessibility of all local statutory and third sector services to minority ethnic culture and faith groups and communities; and
- local child poverty in terms of levels and location

2. Gathering complimentary and contextual information and other relevant local information from schools, local authority children's and adult's social care and housing, the police, the Crime and Disorder Reduction Board, Healthwatch, public health, local multi-faith forum and the Health and Wellbeing Board

The information in points 1 and 2 above should become part of the scope of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, and strong community engagement must be a key element of this process.

3. Engaging with local minority ethnic culture and faith groups and communities to ensure that the information in points 1 and 2 above is as comprehensive and accurate as possible. It must be informed by voices from the groups and communities, and care should be taken to hear the views not only of the group and community leaders but also the groups of men, women and children whom they speak for.

By using dedicated personal outreach to establish contact, the London Community Partnership Project was extraordinarily successful in engaging socially isolated/excluded communities and faith groups both on specific child protection issues and also on a range of other issues which contribute to the welfare and safety of London's children. Statutory agencies were able to increase their own knowledge and awareness of the issues facing local communities and faith groups through their participation in this project, and the creation of cross-London partnerships will further help improve their responses to these communities.

9

4. Using the information in points 1 to 3 above to identify what is working well and where there are gaps or room for improvement in:

- the provision of appropriate services to minority ethnic groups and communities, and
- minority ethnic group and community engagement with these services

5. Prioritise the gaps and areas where improvement is needed according to the degree of risk they pose to children's safety and wellbeing (taking into account for example, prevalence and severity of harm etc); and develop a strategy for addressing them.

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<sup>9</sup> *London Community Partnership Project* (London Board, 2007)

## 4. Engaging minority ethnic culture and faith groups and communities

### 4.1 Community partnership model

The safeguarding children community partnership model is presented here as an example of a model that has been shown to work effectively in two London LSCB areas.

The community partnership model has been pioneered in London by the Victoria Climbié Foundation (VCF) in collaboration with Harrow and Brent Safeguarding Children Boards.

VCF works in partnership with Local Safeguarding Children Boards to engage local communities, and believe that effective community involvement within the LSCB framework would ensure that the voice of the community is heard nationally at strategic and policy decision-making levels.

- 4.1.1 This is a model for community consultation, engagement and collaboration to achieve the LSCB's community partnership objectives. It has been piloted in the *London C&F Project*.
- 4.1.2 The key mechanism for achieving these objectives is a community-led LSCB advisory group to:
- promote the safety and well-being of children in the local minority ethnic culture and faith communities, groups and families, and
  - provide expert advice on related culture and faith community issues
- 4.1.3 The community-led advisory group reports through the Minority Ethnic Culture and Faith Sub-Group or the Champion (see beginning of section 3) to the LSCB. The LSCB relays information and requests for advice to and from the advisory group to the local schools, local authority children's and adults social care and housing, the police, the Crime and Disorder Reduction Board, Healthwatch, public health, local multi-faith forums and the Health and Wellbeing Board.

### 4.2 Developing the model

- 4.2.1 This is a three-phase model.

#### ***Phase I: Community consultation***

- 4.2.2 Phase I comprises a community consultation. The overall scope and aims of the consultation are to undertake a comprehensive review of the needs of local minority groups and communities. This can be expanded and tailored over time to address step 1. – Mapping, of the Framework for action in point 4.1 above. The consultation includes a three-step 'community needs identification consultation' process:
- Development, dissemination and completion of a community needs assessment questionnaire (LSCBs should be prepared to act creatively to ensure strong feedback);
  - Facilitating consultation opportunities (such as seminars) to focus community engagement and draw together themes, and
  - Feedback on the findings and analysis to partner agencies/community groups.

### ***Phase II: Community-led Advisory Group***

- 4.2.3 In Phase II, a Community-led Advisory Group is created within the local LSCB framework.
- 4.2.4 In the pilots, the Victoria Climbié Foundation, with support from the LSCB, led in setting the structure, membership and terms of reference for this group to help work on identified needs within specific LSCB aims and objectives.
- 4.2.5 The Advisory Group nominates a chairperson to represent the group at the LSCB's Minority Ethnic Issues and Communities Sub-Group meetings.
- 4.2.6 An LSCB may want to establish a key role for a Community Lay Member as chair of the reference group and provider of advice or access to expertise on local minority ethnic issues as required.

### ***Phase III: Community Engagement and Communication Strategy***

- 4.2.7 In Phase III, feedback on Phases I and II is provided to partner organisations / community groups at a seminar or series of seminars. In the pilot project the Victoria Climbié Foundation undertook this task. They met with individual members of the community / voluntary groups to establish views and inform the Engagement and Communication Strategy.
- 4.2.8 The Victoria Climbié Foundation drafted the strategy for approval by the LSCB.
- 4.2.9 The strategy typically includes clarity about the roles, responsibilities and expectations of engagement and partnership working for all the stakeholders, with guidance about seeking support if unclear.

## **4.3 Benefits from implementing the model**

- 4.3.1 The Engagement and Communication Strategy will ensure that the LSCB communicates effectively with the local minority ethnic community and that professionals at the front line are informed about developments.
- 4.3.2 If the Community-led Advisory Group is nurtured and the strategy is proactively implemented, together they will support capacity building in the local minority ethnic culture and faith groups and communities to safeguard children. This should include improvements in:
  - community knowledge about UK law and practice in child rearing, additional needs and maltreatment;
  - knowledge of child development and skills in parenting;
  - ability and willingness to identify children at risk of harm and circumstances conducive to abuse and neglect, and
  - knowledge about what to do and being confident in contacting statutory services when there are concerns about a child.
- 4.3.3 The strategy will support campaigns to raise awareness and promote self-protection skills in children and young people.

## **5. Capacity building in minority ethnic culture and faith groups and communities to safeguard children**

### **5.1 The Safeguarding Children's Rights Initiative**

- 5.1.1 There are currently several minority ethnic culture and faith group and community group-led capacity building projects running in London under the auspices of the Safeguarding

Children's Rights Initiative<sup>10</sup>. The projects have recently been evaluated by the Centre for Social Work Research<sup>11</sup> and the key findings are highlighted here:

- **Community organisations can be an important source of advice and support to London's minority ethnic culture and faith groups and communities.** They can assist very new immigrant communities to settle, they can galvanise existing communities and increase opportunities for partnership working and they can, for example, counterbalance the power of an unscrupulous faith leader or organisation in the local community. Community organisations may also include professionals with health and social care remits, and it is vital that LSCBs work in partnership with these individuals.
- **Community-led approaches to promoting child safeguarding have been shown to be critical in engaging socially excluded communities and in changing attitudes and behaviour.** The organisations developed approaches that enabled them to engage and maintain discussions with key participants, and groups of adults, parents, and with young people.
- **Engaging communities in discussion and debate about human rights can be used as a touchstone for change.** There are tensions between children's and parent's rights in all communities. Parents present conflicted states about notions of parent rights and require containment of their distress and confusion. These discussions involve:
  - generating discussion and responses to issues of child protection, understanding UK laws and values relating to children's rights and allowing debate to follow;
  - developing strategies for approaching more contentious subjects, including the role of faith practices; and
  - developing reflective practices that take account of responses to the work of engagement in discussion and training.
- **The promotion of young people as agents of change is particularly powerful.** A number of London LSCBs have introduced arrangements to develop stronger engagement with young people, and have found this to be an extremely effective tool to drive change within local communities. The development of junior safeguarding boards / youth safeguarding ambassadors, with an associated sequence of activities to achieve effectiveness of contribution, are strong examples of good practice in this area.
- **Faith leaders have a pivotal role to play in developing children's rights within minority ethnic culture and faith groups and communities.** A shared commitment has been critical to engaging these leaders – cutting across other differences.

Training has been effective in beginning to address a lack of knowledge of child protection principles and practice among many minority ethnic leaders in London.

12

- **A broad approach promoting children's healthy development, safety and safeguarding is more effective for engaging communities and faith groups than a narrow focus on particular practices.** This approach led to improvements in child protection across the board, including through changed practice and disclosures.

<sup>10</sup> *The Safeguarding Children's Rights Initiative funded by Trust for London:*

[www.trustforlondon.org.uk/special-initiatives/safeguarding-childrens-rights](http://www.trustforlondon.org.uk/special-initiatives/safeguarding-childrens-rights)

<sup>11</sup> Final Evaluation Report (Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust / University of East London, 2011)

<sup>12</sup> Final Evaluation Report (Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust / University of East London, 2011)

## 6. Training and community education

This training section should be read in conjunction with the London Training Toolkit for Safeguarding Children in Minority Ethnic Culture and Faith (often socially excluded) Communities, Groups and Families (London Board, 2011), referred to here as the *London C&F Training Toolkit*

### 6.1 *London C&F Training Toolkit*

- 6.1.1 The aim of the *London C&F Training Toolkit* is to ensure that professionals and voluntary groups working with minority ethnic culture and faith communities, groups and families have access to a wide range of resources, materials and background information to help them develop and design appropriate and sensitive training packages in relation to child protection in its broadest sense.
- 6.1.2 In the toolkit, professionals will find a wide and varied selection of material including scenarios, summaries of Serious Case Reviews, background reading about faith and culture, a resource list and some guidance about group dynamics and basic group work.

### 6.2 LSCB responsibilities

- 6.2.1 Taking into account the five steps listed in the Framework for Action in section 3.2, above, and the link with child poverty, LSCBs should require local safeguarding children training programmes to compliment training from the *London C&F Training Toolkit* with courses on child poverty and healthy child development. This will help the LSCB to furnish professionals and leaders, adults and parents in the local community with the best possible chance of protecting children from harm. In the latter case, it is crucial for people to know what healthy child development 'looks like' and what the signs of impaired development are, so that they can recognise a child whose health and development has been or is being harmed.
- 6.2.2 Training and education to include:
- a) Child protection (including UK law and processes i.e. *London Child Protection Procedures*)
  - b) Child development
  - c) Listening to children
  - d) How minority ethnic issues fit into the Assessment Framework/Triangle<sup>13</sup>
  - e) Cultural competence
  - f) Where to gain expert knowledge of daily life and practices in particular local minority ethnic culture and faith groups and communities
  - g) How, when and where to seek expert advice on individual cases where there are concerns
  - h) How, when and where to use expert advocacy in individual cases where there are concerns

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<sup>13</sup> *The Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families* (Department of Health et al, 2000)

