



staff and levels of training involved. Dr Mangan said that a more detailed report would be given at the next meeting.

Mrs Craig informed Members of a meeting between DE and ETI to discuss how the framework could inform the inspection process. She said that a meeting with the ETI had taken place on 8<sup>th</sup> May. ETI's feedback had been positive and it had made some suggestions for change. ETI had also requested that its officers would be included in the training schedule. Members noted that level 2 and 3 training would be provided to ETI officers. Dr Mangan clarified that ETI would be participating in the training rather than observing the training sessions. The Chair said that collaboration between EA and ETI on this matter would add value to ETI reports.

Dr Mangan said that the Annual Report on Child Protection and Safeguarding would be presented to the Committee at its September meeting.

**Action:** *Report on the implementation plan and a suitable mechanism to record all training activity to be provided at the next meeting. Annual Report on Child Protection and Safeguarding to be presented to the Committee at its September meeting.*

## **6.2 SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE (9)**

Dr Mangan advised that the presentation on child sexual exploitation and the role of EA in raising awareness and providing support had been uploaded to the Members' website.

## **7. HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT**

Mr Hanna presented an update\* (CPS/5/19/6) on the implementation of recommendations from an Internal Audit report and follow up review to address safeguarding risks associated with the operation of contracted home to school transport services provided by privately contracted operators. Three established areas of risk were highlighted. These were the pre-employment checking of contracted drivers, child protection training for contracted drivers, and operational and contractual safeguarding compliance.

Mr Hanna said that pre-employment checking was one of the key measures required to mitigate against safeguarding risks for those employed to work with children and young people. He reported that HR conducted pre-employment checks for all employees, volunteers and contracted staff and annual checks continued following the pre-employment check. A Member queried who was responsible for the costs of the checks. Mr Hanna advised that EA processed the enhanced disclosures and subsequently invoiced private operators. He said that private operators were required to demonstrate that they had a sufficient number of drivers with adequate clearance and training to operate the contract. He reported that significant progress had been made to implement a single regional approach to the pre-employment process for contracted drivers and escorts. New business systems had been jointly implemented by HR and Transport to ensure efficiency and effectiveness of driver pre-employment vetting.

Mr Hanna said that the second key area of concern from the Internal Audit report related to the provision of child protection training for privately contracted drivers and escorts. Transport had worked closely with the Child Protection Support Service (CPSS) on this matter and in line with EA's Child Protection and Safeguarding Learning and Development Strategy 2019-2022. The correct level of training had been established for contracted drivers and escorts and the training programme had commenced in February 2018.

Mr Hanna said that options for the longer term had been considered and these included the implementation of a digital training platform, the continuation of in-house provision, and the

sourcing of external training. Mr Hanna drew attention to the merits and drawbacks of each option and highlighted that the CPSS training sub-group had concluded that provision should continue to be provided in-house. The sub-group had also recommended that a Transport Safeguarding Officer (TSO) should be recruited to design, co-ordinate and deliver a programme of CPS training to privately contracted drivers and escorts.

A Member expressed support for maintaining the training on an in-house basis and he expressed the view that operators needed to be made fully aware of the requirement to ensure that all their drivers were trained appropriately. The Chair agreed and was mindful that EA maintained ownership of the risks associated with the delivery of training to private operators. The Chair expressed the view that the decision to maintain in-house training was based on the needs of vulnerable children. He requested the paper to be updated to include a rationale, based on risk, for the decision to maintain in-house training.

A Member queried the difficulties associated with the delivery of CPS training to 1,600 drivers. Mr Hanna said that a programme of training to privately contracted drivers and escorts had commenced in February 2018. In response to a query from the Chair relating to the number of drivers that had been trained to date, Ms Craig undertook to provide this information as part of an updated paper. A Member suggested that it would be useful for the statistics to be represented in graphic format. Dr Mangan said that the updated paper would also include the resourcing implications associated with training. It was noted that drivers were required to be trained every three years and a discussion ensued on the rationale for the three year timeframe.

Members also discussed training for public contracts such as Translink. A Member said that public operators such as Translink should be expected to apply the same standards of training as had been expected of private operators. Mr Hanna said that Translink was required to vet its own drivers and provide CPS training. The Chair said that EA should receive assurances that the CPS training provided by Translink was suitable.

Mr Hanna said that the third key area of concern highlighted in the Internal Audit report was the lack of sufficient roadside and school based checking of private operators to ensure compliance with contractual safeguarding requirements. The Committee noted that a dedicated Operator Compliance Unit with responsibility to oversee and ensure all home to school transport requirements for private operators would be introduced. This function would be led by the TSO and, subject to approval, the unit would be fully functional for the start of the new school year. The roll out of a programme of roadside safeguarding and compliance checks would also commence in September 2019.

The Chair requested clarification on what resources would be available to the TSO. Mr Hanna said that the TSO would work with EA's District Transport Officers to undertake the schedule of roadside checks. The Chair requested that this information should be clarified in the paper.

Discussion ensued on the need to demonstrate that risks had been mitigated as far as possible. Members considered the need for risk aversion against the inevitable challenges presented by the management of 1,600 drivers. A Member queried whether responsibility lay with operators to notify EA of staff turnover. Mr Hanna said that the turnover of staff provided the greatest difficulty in managing the service from a CPS point of view and that responsibility lay with the operators to inform EA of new drivers.

A discussion ensued on the number of private operators delivering services across the region. Members noted that, in some areas, private contractors competed for EA contracts whilst in other areas taxi services had been provided by a single operator. A Member expressed the view that these risks were required to be factored in to the broader home to school transport risk assessment. A Member highlighted that a number of private operator bus and taxi home to school

contracts were scheduled to be renewed for September 2019. The Member said that this would provide an opportunity to assess the level of services available.

Members discussed service level agreements between taxi operators and Area Learning Communities. Mr Hanna said that such services operated outside the parameters of Home to School transport and that responsibility for transport during the school day resided with schools. He assured Members that EA had issued guidance to schools on this matter. A Member said that where CPS issues had been identified as a result of transport during the school day, mechanisms should be in place to inform EA. A Member expressed the view that schools should be audited to ensure that schools followed the guidance issued by EA.

A Member expressed support for a proposal for EA to establish and lead on the creation of a multi-agency "Safe School Transport" forum to provide a platform for all the regulatory agencies and transport delivery bodies. Members discussed what agencies would be required to participate and Mrs Turbitt informed Members that the proposal had been placed on the SBNI's agenda.

Discussion ensued on the number of officers with CPS responsibilities across the various EA Directorates. The Chair said that a central corporate skillset would be beneficial. A Member said that an internal network for officers with CPS responsibilities would be mutually beneficial for all involved.

A Member referred to personal experience of support provided by the CPSS to schools and thanked Ms Craig for her work.

The Chair thanked Mr Hanna for his paper and suggested that it would be regarded as a working draft at this stage. It was highlighted that further delineation was required to demonstrate what actions had been progressed as interim measures and what steps needed to be put in place as part of an enduring approach that would reduce risk in this area.

Mr Hanna said that information contained within the Transport Risk Register would assist in this piece of work. Members agreed that it was necessary to keep the needs of children and young people as the focus of the risk assessment.

Members agreed that the updated paper and risk assessment would be provided to the Chair and the Chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.

**Actions:**

- *Paper to be updated to provide delineation on what actions had been progressed as part of interim arrangements, what actions were ongoing and an action plan for future activity to consolidate substantial assurances in relation to CPS matters.*
- *Paper to also include a rationale, based on risk, for the decision to maintain in-house training, statistical information on what training had taken place to date, information on resourcing implications in relation to the training of drivers, and clarification on the role of the TSO and the EA's District Transport Officers.*
- *Updated paper and risk assessment to be provided to the Chair and to the Chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.*
- *Officers to request information from Translink on the CPS training of its drivers.*
- *Officers to consider an internal network of officers with CPS responsibilities.*

## 8. EA RESPONSE TO DOJ CONSULTATION: LEGISLATION IN RELATION TO CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

Mrs Turbitt presented a paper on EA's response to the Department of Justice (DoJ) consultation following the review of legislation on Child Sexual Exploitation. She said that EA's response to the consultation was informed by staff within the CPSS, Pupil Support Services, Youth Services and Legal Services. Further to the consideration given to the 22 proposals, it was considered that there was agreement with 19 of the 22 proposals. Areas of disagreement related to: Q8(a) proposals on adults masquerading as a child online; Q12(b) the extension of child abduction to 16 and 17 year olds; and Q13(a) Recovery Orders for children not in care.

In relation to Q8(a) adults masquerading as a child, Mrs Turbitt outlined disagreement with the suggestion that there was no need to create a new offence of an adult masquerading as a child online. She outlined three reasons for the disagreement:

- 1) Legislation needed to send a clear signal to adults about the need to be open and honest when communicating with children and young people.
- 2) The need to safeguard children took precedence over rights of adults to masquerade as a child.
- 3) Effective implementation and awareness raising of legislation that made masquerading as a child online an offence would encourage children to seek advice from trusted adults regarding their engagement with others whilst online and therefore would have the potential to prevent and safeguard through earlier intervention.

A Member referred to other masquerading incidents such as parental activity online to gather evidence of online bullying. Mrs Turbitt said that if a parent was in control of a child's social media account the parent had a responsibility to identify him or herself. Dr Mangan said that the Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (NI) 2016 would be considered at a future meeting.

In relation to Q12(b) Mrs Turbitt outlined disagreement with the suggestion that there was insufficient justification to extend the offence of child abduction by persons other than parents under Article 4 of the Child Abduction (NI) Order 1985 to include children aged 16 and 17. She said that 16 and 17 year olds at risk of abduction for CSE reasons should be entitled to the same protections as young people under 16.

In relation to Q13(a) Mrs Turbitt outlined disagreement with the suggestion that recovery orders would not be an appropriate tool in relation to children not in care who might have been abducted. She said that where police had reasonable suspicion that a young person aged 16 or 17 might be subject to CSE and when the young person did not understand the risk of harm to themselves, it was reasonable to give powers to the police to recover that young person regardless of who held parental responsibility.

A Member referred to Q14(a) relating to new powers to allow police to request information on guests staying in hotel type accommodation. The Member was mindful of the need to strike a balance between personal privacy and the powers of police to investigate CPS matters.

The Committee agreed to recommend that the Board would approve the consultation response\* (CPS/5/19/7).

**Action:** *Committee to consider the Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (NI) 2016 at a future meeting.*

Link to EA's draft consultation response:

<https://sharepoint.eani.org.uk/team/board/BOARDdoc19/2019-05-23/EA's%20draft%20Response%20to%20DoJ%20CSE%20Consultation%20-%20Review%20of%20the%20law%20on%20child%20sexual%20exploitation.pdf>

## 9. CASE MANAGEMENT REVIEW

On the proposal of Mrs Carville, seconded by Mr Lundy, it was agreed that discussion on this matter would be held in committee.

A report was provided on one CMR case.

On the proposal of Mrs Carville, seconded by Mr Lundy, the Committee agreed to resume the meeting.

The Chair reported that whilst in committee a progress report on one CMR case had been noted. The Committee had also noted that action points in relation to the case had been completed.

## 10. ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES: ANIMATION ON TRAUMA INFORMED PRACTICE

*Mrs Carville declared an interest in this item.*

Ms Craig presented an animated video which had been produced by the SBNI on Adverse Childhood Experiences. Discussion ensued on the animation and a Member referred to cases whereby Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) had been identified. The Member expressed concern that no support had been put in place for children who had witnessed traumatic events. A Member agreed and said that links with voluntary agencies should be improved.

Members considered that EATV was a useful resource to improve awareness on ACEs and other CPS matters. A Member said that regular communications via social media was also an effective method of awareness raising. A Member said that the curriculum for Initial Teacher Education was another good example of how awareness could be promoted.

The Chair referred to examples of full service schools in North and West Belfast. He said that the evidence gathered from such initiatives should inform future initiatives. A Member said that EA had opportunity to think strategically as part of a collaborative approach to support children. A Member said that there was capacity to bring schools and the Youth Service closer together in innovative ways. The Member also said that collaborative working across Government departments was also necessary.

## 11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting would be held on 16 September 2019.

The meeting ended at 12.30 pm.

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**Chair**

\*Paper issued with agenda

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**Date**

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