COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP OFFICER

Fixed tenure: October 2012 – March 2014

FINAL REPORT

Fiona Mulvaney
1. Introduction

Wandsworth Safeguarding Children Board appointed a Community Partnership Officer (CPO) on an 18 month fixed-term contract from October 2012. This role has a specific responsibility for developing links with voluntary, community and faith (VCF) groups in the borough, in order to extend good safeguarding practice, particularly to those ‘hard-to-reach’ and previously unidentified groups.

2 interim progress reports were presented to the WSCB Network Board in February and August 2013.

2. Summary of Key Responsibilities & Duties, with Outcomes & Impact

Identify existing voluntary, community and faith (VCF) groups and emerging communities, including supplementary schools in Wandsworth

Mapping commenced in October 2012, and was ongoing as new groups were identified, or made themselves known to the CPO, as a result of publicity or word-of-mouth within communities. To end of February 2014, 121 faith groups, and 94 voluntary and community groups had been identified.

The most recent contact list for VCF groups and locations will be shared with the WSCB Business Manager, and the Voluntary & Community Sector (VCS) Training Co-ordinator, in order that they can maintain links with these groups, through periodic or targeted mail-outs, including distributing the WSCB newsletter, notifications of training and other events, and sharing good practice or disseminating information on legislation changes. Through these colleagues working from a ‘live’ list of contacts, I am hopeful that it can be amended and updated regularly.

I have assisted other colleagues in the council with contacting VCF groups, e.g. by distributing information on private fostering. These departments will still be able to contact the key colleagues mentioned above in order to gain access to contact information on an ad hoc basis.

Engage with hard-to-reach groups and build good working relationships with these communities to increase their knowledge, awareness and recognition of safeguarding and child protection issues

The nature of ‘hard-to-reach’ groups is such that brokering even an initial meeting with them can be time-consuming and frustrating. A multi-faceted approach was taken to contact groups via a range of methods, including phone and email introductions, letters, questionnaires, training offers, and numerous occasions of ‘cold-calling’ at listed premises. ‘Cold-calling’, whilst time-consuming, resulted in access to groups that had failed to respond to other methods of contact. It also resulted in only 2 negative responses where the person present declined to co-operate or was resistant to contact; both of these were established and sizeable Christian communities.

On initial contact, all groups were offered a safeguarding information pack, containing signposting information on a range of issues, including DV, nurseries and children’s centres, private fostering, disability support, mediation and the role of the LADO. A guide to registering on TPD online was also included. Content of the packs was varied and added to periodically to include new or updated publications. Groups contacted were initially asked to complete a simple grid to indicate what
support they would welcome. The overwhelming majority of responses were requesting training – all such requests were then channelled to the VCS Training Co-Ordinator to follow up.

In some cases, it took months to establish a relationship of trust and openness in order to have meaningful dialogue with hard-to-reach groups. There are numerous examples of effective links having been established and cemented throughout the tenure, the following being a notable selection:

- **A BAME church in Battersea**, with internal feuding between factions, which had resulted in violent confrontations during church services, and consequent police interventions including arrests for public order offences. Safeguarding concerns were raised about children being present, and potentially at risk, during these confrontations, and also threats to security at the vicarage when children’s Bible classes were in progress. Upon further investigation, it also transpired that inadequate safeguarding measures were in place; for example, Sunday school teachers were recruited by personal referral rather than a formal process, and DBS checks were not routinely obtained.

This was a very complex and sensitive matter, and the feud had been developing for 2 years in a shroud of secrecy and external involvement was actively resisted. My early interventions with this church included meetings with the senior clergy and trustees. I gradually obtained their agreement to include the Safer Neighbourhoods team in discussions to try to help resolve the issues between the parties in dispute. I engaged the CCPAS mediation service who brokered a partial resolution. I clearly explained to the trustees their responsibilities with regards safeguarding children within their congregation, and helped them draft a safeguarding policy. I introduced them to the Safe Network resources, and encouraged them to use these as appropriate to ensure safer recruitment of volunteers. I assisted the church to find an umbrella organisation willing to sponsor their DBS applications, and I supported them through this process. I also arranged for the VCS Training Co-ordinator to meet with the church trustees to explain the training on offer to them, and to subsequently enrol the key clergy and trustees on multi-agency training.

- **Mosques and madrassahs** around the borough proved difficult to engage initially. I worked with the Prevent Co-ordinator to broker introductions and contacts with some more receptive members of the communities, in order to gain initial access. We then had a number of meetings with Faith Associates, a consultancy who work with ethnic minority faith-based communities, to draw up a plan of engagement. Subsequently, Faith Associates delivered a 2 day Madrassah Management & Safeguarding Training in the borough over a weekend in November 2013. This was attended by 35 community representatives, including madrassah teachers and volunteers. I attended this weekend event in order to deliver a segment on safeguarding, distribute information and signposting packs, and establish networking links with those present. 30 delegates were female and it became apparent that many of them had never previously undertaken any form of safeguarding training, nor had opportunities to link with other women or groups within the wider Muslim community.

As the Prevent Co-ordinator had previously mooted the plan of setting up a Muslim Women’s Network within the borough, I made sure that this group of delegates were actively pursued to participate, as this was clearly a rich source of previously unidentified women playing a significant role in education and care for children and young people.

The Muslim Women’s Network was launched in January 2014 and I am liaising with the Prevent Co-ordinator to assist the group in drafting child protection policies and procedures, and to ensure children’s safeguarding is embedded as one of its key objectives and concerns.
Faith Associates are currently scheduling safeguarding ‘healthchecks’ at 5 mosque-based madrassahs in the borough, which are intended to be completed before the end of March 2014. It is proposed that I will shadow at least one of these healthcheck visits over 2 days, in order to carry out QA.

**Develop safeguarding checklist to help voluntary, community and faith groups meet/fulfil their safeguarding responsibilities**

I developed a safeguarding ‘healthcheck’ questionnaire to be completed by VCF groups. This was largely based on available S11 audit tools, although I also incorporated additional questions specific to signposting, at the request of the Head of Research & Evaluation.

The majority of questionnaires were completed during face-to-face meetings. For various reasons, not all groups who otherwise engaged wished to complete a questionnaire, for example, in cases where there were language barriers, time constraints, or where the group already carries out an audit for their own governing body and did not wish to replicate this.

In total, 82 healthcheck questionnaires were completed, 34 of which were from faith groups and 48 were voluntary or community groups. The main results were then summarised in order to identify trends and areas of strength or requiring further development.

(Appendix i – VCF Healthcheck questionnaires – final summary)

**Establish effective two-way communication arrangements within these communities and groups, to ensure they will be sustainable after the duration of this post**

In all cases where I have engaged with groups and communities, particularly those regarded as hard-to-reach, I have been mindful of establishing two-way links with a view to ensuring sustainability after my tenure. Once I have nurtured positive working relationships with these groups myself, I have brokered meetings and links with other professionals and agencies as appropriate, in order that communications can be further developed and strengthened. At various times, this has included co-working with health professionals, Community Safety, YSTs, Parent Workers, Safer Neighbourhoods teams, Private Fostering and different projects/teams of the Met Police. This has meant that the community groups have several layers of contact with the local authority and partner agencies, all of which can continue to support aspects of safeguarding.

A pertinent example of this work is:

**The Somali community on the Doddington & Rollo estate.** The 2 key community groups on the estate are the Association of Somali Women & Children (ASWAC), and the ELAYS Network, who are a youth empowerment organisation. I specifically wished to engage this community on the subject of tackling Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). However, it took several months of rapport-building visits, offering support on a range of non-contentious issues, in order to be trusted and sufficiently accepted in order to broach this sensitive topic. I established regular meetings with ASWAC to examine attitudes and share information on FGM. These meetings began with 4 or 5 women present, with attendance increasing as word-of-mouth spread, expanding to a regular attendance of 25-30 women, all keen to be heard and expressing gratitude at the opportunity to be consulted and listened to as part of this process.
I enlisted several colleagues and agencies to engage in information-sharing at these sessions, including the Head of Community Safety, the Specialist Perineal Midwife and FORWARD.

In February 2014, I facilitated a full community meeting on the estate, inviting a DCI from Project Azure to discuss the police stance on FGM. Participants at this meeting included ASWAC, ELAYS Network, FORWARD, a community Imam, a representative from Katherine Low Settlement, youth workers and teachers. This resulted in a wide-ranging and frank exchange of views and ideas. The police officer who attended suggested a confidential method of garnering information on FGM from the community, and it was agreed that 2 community leaders will liaise with him to further develop that idea. It was also agreed that he will return to report back to a follow-up meeting in the Spring. I am confident that there is now sufficient momentum within this community, and networking established between key players, to ensure that this work can continue to be facilitated after my time in post ends, and I have worked hard to empower the community leaders within ASWAC particularly, to ensure that they feel confident to continue in positive partnership with the authorities.

*Gather information and identify safeguarding needs and service provision in relation to complex issues and illegal practices*

**FGM:** I became the London SCB Culture & Faith sub-group Lead on FGM in 2013. In this capacity, I have been part the Met Police Strategy Group on FGM. This has enabled me to develop two-way links between the police and the Somali community in Battersea, as detailed above, which has resulted in current activities to pilot a confidential method of informing on FGM practice.

As sub-group Lead on FGM, I have also been involved in gathering and disseminating good practice on tackling FGM from other London boroughs, and this in turn has helped inform the Wandsworth Strategy Group, currently led by Public Health.

**ABUSE RELATED TO CULTURE & FAITH:** I am a core member of the Met Police Project Ocean working group, which was established to map and identify supplementary schools, and ensure that safeguarding information, advice and guidance was being disseminated to these unregulated groups. In this working group, we agreed the wording for a safeguarding leaflet aimed at supplementary schools, to be produced by each borough with local contacts and information.

*(Appendix ii - Keeping Supplementary Education Safe & Effective leaflet)*

**‘HONOUR’-BASED VIOLENCE AND FORCED MARRIAGE:** Through my membership of the London SCB Culture & Faith sub-group, I have actively pursued the possibility of Wandsworth being included in a proposed MOPAC (Mayor’s Office) pilot aimed at addressing these culture-based issues. To date, this pilot has faced a series of delays, so no further activity is likely until summer 2014; however our interest is registered with the relevant officers should this opportunity materialise.

*Be the link between the Wandsworth Safeguarding Children Board and the LSP Multi-Faith sub-group*

I have participated in the LSP Multi-Faith sub-group, raising safeguarding matters, sharing information, promoting events and explaining the work and role of the WSCB.
Ensure VCF groups have access to and receive appropriate safeguarding training; as well as run workshops and discussion groups in partnership with new communities and faith groups, in consultation with the Training Officer for the Voluntary Sector

Whenever a training need has been identified, this has been passed to the VCS Training Co-ordinator to follow up and support the group in registering on TPD online, and then to actively encourage and monitor participation in multi-agency training.

I have liaised with the VCS Training Co-ordinator to ensure that the multi-agency training programme has been flexible in accommodating the needs of specific target groups, including scheduling sessions in non-council locations, as appropriate.

Strong links have been established with Safe Network, and we have run several sessions for VCF groups, supporting them to register with, and navigate, the Safe Network website. To date, 85 groups or individuals in Wandsworth have registered with Safe Network.

I have addressed formal and informal meetings with a wide range of VCF groups across Wandsworth, delivering presentations, distributing information and explaining the safeguarding responsibilities incumbent on all groups who work with children in any capacity.

Since October 2012, 375 representatives of VCF organisations are recorded as having attended multi-agency safeguarding training events. Of these, only 30 were specifically from faith groups, with the remainder identified as being from Voluntary or Community groups. It has proved difficult to enlist faith groups to engage with the TPD events – the main reason for their reluctance to attend seems to be that faith groups are often under direction to receive safeguarding children from their own diocese/governing body, which is specific to that faith and doctrine. They may feel more comfortable doing this within a faith setting, rather than a multi-agency secular setting, and some report that it seems pointless to ‘double up’ on training they receive internally. Nevertheless, both anecdotally, and as reflected by the responses to the healthcheck questionnaire, a significant number of leaders and volunteers in a range of faith groups have not undertaken any safeguarding training in 18 months or longer; therefore this remains an area of concern.

Ensure that the views of children and young people and their families are ascertained and taken into account

Having been seconded from my substantive role in the YST, I have been very mindful throughout of the importance of empowering and engaging children and young people, and their parents/carers in particular.

Children and Young People: The Young People’s Forum has been asked to debate and feedback on a number of issues concerning them, and one activity involved them producing a series of video vox pops on the theme of sexual bullying.

I collaborated with Graveney School on their themed week of activities on E-safety, culminating in a video and poster competition. Some of the winning entries were subsequently featured in the WSCB promotional video.

Following this successful collaboration, Graveney School also asked me to help them produce resources for a Mental Health Wellbeing Day for their entire Year 9 cohort in July 2013. I was one of
the facilitators for this event, delivering sessions to several groups of students, which incorporated aspects of “A Young Person’s Guide”, which is a WSCB publication specifically produced to provide advice and guidance to young people on a range of safeguarding issues.

For Safeguarding Week 2013, I produced a series of resources on the theme ‘Sexual Bullying Stinks’, which was delivered by colleagues in the YST/Youth Service at several settings across the borough during that week.

**Parents/Careers**: In response to requests from the WSCB Network Board to develop engagement with parents, I have worked with one of the borough’s Parent Workers and a group of her clients to develop parenting resources on 3 issues that they particularly identified as areas of concern: Bullying; Sexual Texting; Drugs & Alcohol. In each case, we have produced a simple lesson plan for facilitators, to enable them to work with groups or an individual parent, as well as a straightforward parent/carer’s helpsheet to summarise the key points, as well as signposting them to sources of help and advice. I have attached the resources for one session as information.

These resources are currently being tested with a parent/carers’ focus group, who will be invited to have further input to develop or adapt them, or suggest additional themes.

The resources will be made available to parent workers across the borough, and can also be shared with any other professionals who work with families.

*(Appendix iii – Bullying resource for parents/carers)*

**To produce policy, publicity, practice guidance and other reports as appropriate to present to different audiences in relation to community and faith groups, and to organise and facilitate events on safeguarding themes**

As part of the WSCB team, I contributed to the development and implementation of the revamped WSCB website, which was relaunched in early 2013. I added a portal for VCF groups, including a link to Safe Network, in order to enable groups to register and access all the up-to-date resources.

I took on the main responsibility for producing the new WSCB newsletter which was launched in April 2013. The third issue is due in Spring 2014.

I also produced the safeguarding leaflet for Supplementary Schools as detailed above, which has been widely distributed across the borough.

I was the Lead for Safeguarding Week in June 2013, organising and facilitating an array of events, including information sessions, training events, and a mini-conference. I also produced all the accompanying literature and publicity for these events. Safeguarding Week was extremely successful: all staff and multi-agency events were over-subscribed; 160 multi-agency staff attended one or more events during the week, and interactive events for young people were run at 7 youth clubs/Connexions settings and 1 secondary school. I have also participated in council-led young people’s events, including Faith Direct and the Anti-Racist Bullying day.

I wrote and produced a 4 minute promotional video to explain the work of WSCB to a wider audience, and this is now available in a range of media formats.

*(Appendix iv – Safeguarding Week 2013 summary)*
3. Summary of headlines and legacy actions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACHIEVED:</th>
<th>LEGACY/CONSOLIDATION CHALLENGES:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>215 VCF groups identified and contacted</td>
<td>Database of groups to be maintained and updated</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Periodic contact with groups to be maintained for information-sharing; training &amp; events publicity etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Madrassah Management &amp; Safeguarding event delivered</td>
<td>Safeguarding healthchecks to be completed by Faith Associates at 5 mosques/madrassahs by end March 2014</td>
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<tr>
<td>82 VCF healthcheck questionnaires returned and analysed</td>
<td>Periodic audit/information gathering from VCF groups to be carried out</td>
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<tr>
<td>FGM: substantial progress made with regards Wandsworth strategy, Project Azure and engagement with Somali community</td>
<td>Wandsworth Strategy to be launched in Spring 2014</td>
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<td>Met Police information gathering pilot proposed for Spring/Summer 2014</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Engagement and two-way communication with Somali community to be maintained</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Link with London SCB Culture &amp; Faith sub-group to be maintained</td>
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<tr>
<td>Supplementary Schools: advice and guidance leaflet published and distributed</td>
<td>Link with Project Ocean to be maintained</td>
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<tr>
<td>‘Honour’ based violence/forced marriage</td>
<td>Link with London SCB Culture &amp; Faith sub-group to be maintained in order to keep abreast of MOPAC developments</td>
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<tr>
<td>375 VCF delegates attended multi-agency Safeguarding training</td>
<td>Training events to be promoted to VCF groups regularly.</td>
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<td>Main challenge is to develop greater uptake from faith groups.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Children and young people have been engaged on several initiatives and events</td>
<td>Continued engagement and input from children and young people to be sought</td>
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<tr>
<td>ACHIEVED:</td>
<td>LEGACY/CONSOLIDATION CHALLENGES:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parent/carers’ resources on 3 Safeguarding issues created and tested</td>
<td>Links to be maintained with services working with parents to engage them proactively in a wider range of Safeguarding issues</td>
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<tr>
<td>VCF portal on WSCB website created</td>
<td>To be maintained</td>
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<tr>
<td>WSCB newsletter published bi-annually</td>
<td>Publication to be maintained</td>
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<tr>
<td>160 multi-agency staff participated in Safeguarding Week 2013 events</td>
<td>Safeguarding Week to be maintained each year, with appropriate events on a topical theme or initiative</td>
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</table>

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6th March 2014