

Witness Name: Kate Dixon

Statement No.: 13

Exhibits: KD13- 01 to 02

Dated: 27th July 2020

THE INDEPENDENT INQUIRY INTO CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

13th Witness Statement of Kate Dixon

Introduction

I, Kate Dixon, of the Department for Education, Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, London, SW1P 3BT will say as follows:

1. I am employed by the Department for Education (“DfE”) as the Director of School Quality and Safeguarding Group. I have worked for the DfE since July 2016, and I have been responsible for DfE's work in respect of safeguarding in schools, policy and regulation for independent schools, including boarding, counter-extremism and the prevention of radicalisation in the education sector, and out-of-school settings policy. I have covered most of these areas since July 2017, and all of them since October 2018.
2. I am duly authorised to make this statement on behalf of DfE. Where the facts stated in this witness statement are within my own knowledge, they are true, and where they are not within my own knowledge they are derived from departmental papers and records, and they are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.
3. This witness statement is made as an update to my earlier statement signed on 9 January 2020, which was in response to a request for such a statement, dated 3 October 2019, made on behalf of the Chair to the Inquiry pursuant to Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006.

Out-of-school settings voluntary safeguarding code of practice and accompanying parental guidance

4. Owing to the DfE's critical role in responding to the COVID-19 crisis, we have had to revise some of the expected timetable for plans outlined in my witness statement of January this year.
5. In my witness statement I indicated that the DfE was intending to publish the Government's response to the consultation on the out-of-school settings voluntary safeguarding code of practice and accompanying parental guidance, and the final versions of these documents, in early 2020. However, due to COVID-19 and the Government's ongoing response to this pandemic, the completion and publication of this work and the accompanying communications activity has been delayed.
6. The COVID-19 crisis has been unprecedented in the scale of challenge posed for the country, education settings, the DfE and wider Civil Service. With settings being closed to minimise the risk of virus transmission, the DfE's focus to date has needed to be on supporting schools, and the wider education sector (including out-of-school settings), to open as safely as possible to minimise the risks to the nation's health. We have therefore had to prioritise work to support education settings to open in a phased manner. This includes the publication of guidance on protective measures for out-of-school settings **[KD13-01]** to support providers to open as safely as possible over the summer, as well as accompanying guidance for parents **[KD13-02]** on the precautions they should take if they are considering sending their children to provision over the summer. In drafting both of these pieces of guidance we sought to incorporate some of the principles from the draft voluntary code of practice, in particular when drafting the guidance for parents, where we included some examples of positive signs to look out for when choosing an out-of-school settings provider. These documents continue to be reviewed and updated to reflect the latest scientific advice.
7. Due to the ongoing nature of this work and the DfE's wider response to the COVID-19 crisis, we are not yet able to confirm when the DfE will be in a position to publish the Government response to the out-of-school settings voluntary safeguarding code of practice consultation, or the final versions of

the code of practice and accompanying parental guidance. Careful consideration will need to be given to the best timing for this, in conjunction with the Government's wider work on responding to COVID-19, where there remains a need to ensure focused messaging continues to reach the sector on how best to reduce the risk of infection and transmission of the virus.

8. The DfE's current primary focus at this stage of the pandemic is making preparations to ensure children can return to school safely in September, and to ensure sufficient childcare provision is available to parents who need support to return to work where they can. We will, however, keep the Inquiry updated on the Government's response to the consultation and accompanying parental guidance and will share a final version of these with the Inquiry as soon as the DfE is able to do so.

Out-of-school settings multi-agency pilots

9. I would also like to update the Inquiry on the latest position with regards to our out-of-school settings multi-agency pilots; the main phase of which concluded in March 2020.
10. The evaluation of the pilots is still ongoing and, similarly to the code of practice, part of this work has been delayed as a result of ongoing response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Since my January witness statement, however, the DfE has taken the decision to continue funding specific out-of-school setting projects in six of the pilot local authorities. All the projects being extended were recommended for continuation by our independent evaluator, Ask Research, and have been identified as particularly promising, new, and novel approaches that could be used to enhance the safeguarding and increase the welfare of children in out-of-school settings. These projects are currently expected to conclude in Autumn 2021.
11. We will share further detail on these with the Inquiry, at the same time as we share the final evaluation report for the main phase of the pilot work.

Statement of Truth

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

Signature:

DPA

Date: 27.07.2020