Evaluation Report

Safe Network [2011-13]

Safeguarding children in the voluntary and community sector

Deb James and Sally Cupitt
Charities Evaluation Services
April 2013
List of case studies

Programme delivery ........................................................................................................ 27

Case study 1 – reaching faith and minority communities
   Luton’s network of Safe Network Champions

Case study 2 – reaching un-regulated education providers
   The National Resource Centre for Supplementary Education

Case study 3 – reaching small volunteer-led groups
   Pre-School Learning Alliance Champions at work

VCS organisations ............................................................................................................. 41

Case study 4 – stories from small organisations
   How Safe Network has helped small VCS organisations

Infrastructure support .................................................................................................... 55

Case study 5 – a top-down and bottom-up approach to supporting the sector
   Warwickshire LSCB and Warwickshire Children’s Voluntary Youth Services

Case study 6 – a cross-sector network of Champions
   Hampshire creates a cross-sector network of Champions

Case study 7 – improving commissioning for accident prevention
   Bradford Safeguarding Board’s experience of mentoring

Case study 8 – working in partnership at a national level
   The Churches Child Protection Advisory Service

Overcoming challenges .................................................................................................... 74

Case study 9 – creating localised resources
   South Gloucestershire creates bespoke Standards

Case study 10 – piloting local accreditation of the Standards
   Bexley’s Safer Bexley kitemark

Case study 11 – making it easier, using new media
   Safe Network tries new ways of working
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronyms</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BME</td>
<td>black and minority ethnic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAPT</td>
<td>Child Accident Prevention Trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CES</td>
<td>Charities Evaluation Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DBS</td>
<td>Disclosure and Barring Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIE</td>
<td>Department for Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISA</td>
<td>Independent Safeguarding Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LSCB</td>
<td>Local Safeguarding Children Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSPCC</td>
<td>National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RDM</td>
<td>Safe Network Regional Development Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VCS</td>
<td>Voluntary and community sector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LADO</td>
<td>Local Authority Designated Officer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. Introduction

1.1 About Safe Network

Safe Network was established as the national safeguarding unit for the third sector in 2009. It aims to build the capacity of voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations to safeguard children and young people in all their activities and within communities.

The Network is currently a partnership between NSPCC, Children England and the Child Accident Prevention Trust, funded for two years (2011-13) by the Department for Education’s ‘Improving Outcomes for Children’ grants programme.

The ‘Improving Outcomes for Children’ programme was established in 2011 in recognition of the crucial and potentially increasing role played by the voluntary and community sector in improving children’s lives. The most recent estimates suggest that some 64,000 charities (half of all charities in England) work with children and young people, and at least eight million children participate in activities delivered by the VCS. [National Children’s Bureau, 2011] This figure is expected to increase in part because of cuts in public services and a drive towards creating more commissioning opportunities for the private, voluntary and independent sector to deliver more services for children, young people and families. An increase in VCS services is also anticipated due to fears that recent social welfare changes may result in increases in child and family poverty, and thereby increase demand for VCS services from low income and disadvantaged families.

In April 2011 at the launch of the ‘Improving Outcomes’ grants programme, the then Children’s Minister, Tim Loughton, emphasised that:

_The Government is committed to supporting voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations to have a much greater involvement in the running of public services. The VCS is central to our commitment to building a Big Society … The voluntary sector plays, and will continue to play, a significant role in reforming services for children, young people and families. I hope this grant further inspires a responsive and determined sector to do even more to improve outcomes for children, young people, parents and families._

The current Safe Network programme builds on the previous programme, run by Children England and NSPCC from 2009 – 2011 and funded by the former Department for Children Schools and Families. The Child Accident Prevention Trust’s (CAPT) ‘Making the Link’ programme likewise builds on activities that had been delivered across England since 2009. CAPT’s joining Safe Network in 2011 was welcomed as a way to enhance the Network’s ability to support voluntary and community organisations (VCS organisations) to reduce the risk of childhood accidental injury within their activities.

At the time of writing this report, the partnership had just received confirmation that funding for Safe Network will continue for a further two years.
1.2 Safe Network aims

The three overarching aims of the Safe Network programme are:

1. To improve the ability of the VCS to keep children and young people safe
2. To strengthen the support available to help the VCS keep children safe
3. To enable parents and carers to keep their children safe in activities offered by VCS organisations.

The diagram below describes the programme’s end outcomes and intended impact.

Target groups for Safe Network activities

In line with its core aims, Safe Network has three main target groups for its activities:

- **The VCS** - with particular emphasis on identified priority groups; those who work with the most vulnerable and/or disadvantaged young people, and/or those who may be least engaged with or aware of mainstream safeguarding support and training. For example, small volunteer-led organisations, those working in isolated rural areas, black and minority ethnic and refugee groups, and those for whom work with children and young people is new and/or is not their primary focus.

- **Influencers and supporters of the VCS** - those organisations and partnerships whose decisions can shape the policies, resources and support available to promote good safeguarding practice within the VCS (eg, local VCS infrastructure organisations, Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs), commissioners, funders and national membership/umbrella organisations).

- **Parents and carers** – so that they can be more aware of what assurances and good practice they should look for from VCS organisations providing care or activities for their children.

A decision was taken at an early stage that more could be achieved for parents and carers by working in partnership with specialist VCS organisations than by direct engagement with parents/carers so a priority has been given to engaging the first two target groups.
The specific outcomes for each target group are outlined below.

**Intended outcomes**

**VCS outcomes (improved ability to keep children and young people safe)**

1. **Safer employment**
   More VCS organisations will have increased knowledge and awareness of safer employment practice, and their employment practices (for recruitment, supervision and support) will reflect best practice and will be demonstrably safer.

2. **Child safeguarding**
   More VCS organisations will understand how to minimise the risk of emotional and physical harm for children (eg, from bullying or unintentional injury). More VCS organisations will have effective and proportionate arrangements for assessing and managing risk in their activities with children and young people.

3. **Child protection**
   More VCS organisations will understand their role in protecting children and young people from abuse and will have effective safeguards in place to prevent abuse.

4. **Working together**
   More VCS organisations will have an awareness of local safeguarding arrangements, and a better understanding of where they fit within these.

**Infrastructure outcomes (a stronger infrastructure of support for VCS activity)**

5. **Local support for good practice in safeguarding**
   More local support for safeguarding will be available through a network of safeguarding ‘Champions’ (individuals who sign up to act as Safe Network representatives in their own organisations and communities and can go on to become trained and approved providers for Safe Network products in their area).

6. **LSCB engagement with the VCS on safeguarding issues**
   LSCBs will better recognise, value and support the role of the VCS in safeguarding children and young people.

7. **Local commissioners’ engagement with the VCS on safeguarding issues**
   More local commissioners will have an improved understanding of the importance of keeping children safe, and will recognise, value and support the VCS’ safeguarding role within the new commissioning environment.

8. **National and subsector support for good practice in safeguarding**
   More national and subsector infrastructure organisations and funders will engage in work to promote best practice and clear safeguarding standards in the VCS.

**Parent/carer outcomes (more aware of how to keep children safe)**

9. **Parents’/carers’ awareness of safeguarding**
   More parents and carers will be aware of what VCS organisations should be doing to keep children safe and to protect them from harm.
1.3 Objectives of the Safe Network programme

We outline below Safe Network’s main objectives (broad areas of activity); the methods through which it hopes to achieve its intended outcomes.

The Network’s activities are delivered by the three partners:

1. A core team (the Central Team) based at the NSPCC co-ordinates the programme and offers a range of resources, a central enquiry service and support to the outreach work led by the partners.

2. A Children England-managed team of Regional Development Managers (RDMs) provides outreach work, works with local organisations, LSCBs and commissioners, and recruits and supports Safe Network Champions.

3. A team based at CAPT focuses primarily on the production of resources, delivery of training, and specialist mentoring with Childhood Unintentional Injury Prevention strategic leads in four local authority areas.

The programme has seven main objectives:

- To develop and provide accessible websites and resources.
- To deliver a varied programme of training and learning events/activities.
- To offer direct advice and information on safeguarding issues via outreach and an enquiry service.
- To build a network of safeguarding ‘Champions’ to promote and support good safeguarding practice within the VCS.
- To engage, support and work in partnership with local decision-makers who can influence, resource and support VCS safeguarding practice.
- To engage, support and work in partnership with national and sub-sector/specialist bodies who can likewise influence, resource and support VCS safeguarding practice.
- To engage with and inform parents and carers about what constitutes good safeguarding practice within the VCS.

We have included as Appendix 1 a detailed description of the various Safe Network services, resources and products (outputs) that sit beneath each of the seven objectives.
1.4  Context – safeguarding children and young people

Safeguarding in the UK

In the past decade a number of high-profile child protection cases in the UK have raised serious concerns about the neglect and abuse of children both within their own homes and while in the care of adults within childcare and youth settings. These cases have also highlighted the failings of statutory service providers and the wider social work system to prevent such neglect and abuse, and/or to respond to it appropriately once identified.

Following several enquiries and reviews, largely prompted by these cases, new policies and guidance have been developed to improve child protection practice. Much of the emphasis has been on:

- better inter-agency communication and joint work between agencies involved in ensuring children’s welfare
- ensuring that those who work with children are vetted and supervised to ensure their appropriateness to do so
- early intervention to prevent harm and to offer more targeted support at an earlier stage for ‘troubled’ or ‘at risk’ children, young people and families.

The phase of the Safe Network programme which is the focus of this report (2011-13) has seen a number of important conclusions reached as regards how best to safeguard children and protect them from harm. This period has seen the emergence of new legislation and guidance both about how children should be safeguarded, and about the roles of different agencies within safeguarding. It has also seen significant changes in the commissioning roles of statutory bodies which impact on the role of the VCS as a provider of services and on its safeguarding role. These have included:

- The Munro Review of Child Protection
- Disclosure and Barring and the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA)
- Revised Working Together Guidance
- The restructuring of health and care services and commissioning bodies.

**Munro Review of Child Protection**

In May 2011 the third and final report from the Munro Review of Child Protection was presented to government ministers - delivering a range of recommendations with significant implications for the way that child protection services are run at a local level. It offered guidance on serious case reviews, emphasised the importance of early intervention, and reflected a shift away from central prescription towards individual discretion in local decision-making. It placed a renewed emphasis on joint work to achieve the best outcomes for children.

**Disclosure and Barring and the ISA**

The introduction of the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA) and the Vetting and Barring Scheme in 2009 was followed by a period of uncertainty and review as original plans were first scaled back and then changed altogether. It was not until 2012 that the government announced that under the Protection of Freedoms Act the Criminal Records Bureau would merge with the ISA to become the Disclosure and
Barring Service (DBS) as of 1 December 2012. The new DBS aims to provide a joined-up service to combine the criminal records and barring functions.

**Working Together**

The Working Together (Working Together to Safeguard Children) guidance of 2006 was first updated in 2010, and is a key part of statutory guidance on safeguarding children. It gives LSCBs the lead role in monitoring the work of the Local Authority and other Board partners individually and collectively to safeguard and promote children’s welfare. It also places a duty on LSCBs to ensure that organisations with a duty under Section 11 of the Children Act 2004 are fulfilling their statutory obligations for safeguarding and promoting children’s welfare. In 2012 the government announced a consultation on revisions to Working Together. These include changes in the way ‘children in need’ assessments are undertaken, new guidance on learning and improvement, new arrangements for serious case reviews, and a stronger focus on the quality of practice, and on individual organisations’ professionalism and decision-making. After several delays, the revised guidance was published in March 2013.

**Restructuring of public services and new commissioning arrangements**

New commissioning arrangements have gradually been put in place over the past two years in regard to local commissioning of health, public health and social care services. The focus on Joint Strategic Needs Assessments as key to identifying commissioning priorities has been introduced alongside the introduction of Health and Wellbeing Boards and the re-location of the public health function within Local Authorities. Health and Wellbeing Boards have been established in shadow form over the past two years but will be formalised on 1 April 2013, at which point they will supersede Children’s Trusts as the main forum for joint work on improving health and wellbeing and reducing health inequalities for children, young people and families. The driver behind these developments has been in part to enable more integrated commissioning and joined-up services.

**A role for Safe Network**

This overall policy context helps us understand the place of Safe Network as a national support programme for the children and young people’s VCS over the last two years. It has provided a number of important drivers for the programme and has increased levels of need within the sector for:

- up-to-date information and guidance to enable it to respond to the challenges and opportunities of the new landscape for children's services and safeguarding;
- opportunities for workforce development on safeguarding, joint work and early intervention;
- support for organisations to put in place robust frameworks, policies and procedures that help them minimise risk, meet quality standards, and ultimately keep children and young people safe from harm and able to achieve positive outcomes.
2. **About this evaluation**

2.1 **Aims and focus**

In November 2011 Charities Evaluation Services (CES) was commissioned to evaluate the Safe Network programme (2011-13). The evaluation was intended to be both formative and summative; with CES producing formative reports on learning and achievements at different points throughout the life of the programme, and this final evaluation report in March 2013.

**Aims**

Our evaluation assesses both the implementation of the programme and its impact. Our three main aims were:

1. To assess the delivery of the programme (efficiency and quality)

2. To identify and understand the difference the programme makes, and to whom (outcomes and reach)

3. To identify key factors affecting the programme’s success and any learning to inform further development of the programme (learning, process and context).

**Focus**

Our evaluation focuses on identifying and understanding the outcomes achieved for the VCS and for those who support and/or resource its activities, and not on outcomes for parents/carers. This reflects Safe Network’s early decision to engage parents/carers indirectly through VCS partners, and a subsequent decision that impact on parents and carers would therefore lie outside the scope of our evaluation.

**Key evaluation questions**

**Questions about efficiency, quality and reach**

- What has been delivered and to whom? Has Safe Network delivered services in line with its agreed plans and achieved its delivery targets? To what extent has the Network been successful in engaging with identified priority groups? How satisfied are key stakeholders with the quality of its services and activities?

**Questions about outcomes**

- Has Safe Network achieved its intended outcomes for the VCS? What changes has it made to organisations’ knowledge and understanding about safeguarding issues, and to their safeguarding practice? Has Safe Network increased the amount and/or quality of safeguarding support available for the VCS? Has it contributed to improved understanding and valuing of the VCS’ safeguarding role among LSCBs and local commissioners? How have LSCBs and local commissioners benefited through engaging with the Network?

**Questions about learning, process and context**

- What activities and contexts have facilitated and/or hindered change? How have Safe Network’s values and the nature of the partnership influenced the programme’s development, delivery, and outcomes? Has the Network built
left relationships with relevant partners? How has the external context affected performance, and how well has the Network responded to that context?

2.2 Methodology and sample

Methods
We planned a multi-method approach to address the evaluation questions of most interest to the Network. This involved:

Desk research
- A review and analysis of programme documentation (output and outcomes data) plus additional desk research to enable us to explore the performance and achievements of the programme, and to understand the wider context for its work.

Online stakeholder surveys
- Two annual surveys of VCS organisations to help us better understand use of services, satisfaction and outcomes, and a survey of Safe Network Champions to help us understand the Champions programme, what they have delivered, what has helped or hindered, the outcomes achieved, and what has been learnt. We hoped to engage with 300 VCS organisations and 50 Champions.

Qualitative interviews
- Semi-structured telephone interviews exploring different stakeholder perspectives on Safe Network achievements, learning and outcomes. Our plan was to interview at least 50 individuals from groups including VCS organisations, Champions, LSCB Leads and Commissioners, national partners, and Making the Link mentees. We also planned additional interviews with the three Network partners, focused primarily on the workings of the programme, management, partnership working and learning.

Case studies
- In-depth case studies to explore how the Network has made a difference in different contexts and with different types of organisation and/or approaches. Based on desk research and interviewing these were intended to illustrate in depth, a person, group, locality, intervention or process. We developed eleven case studies (which have been edited for inclusion within this report but are available in full on the Safe Network website).

Appendix 2 contains more detail about our methods, activities, sampling methods and final sample.

Sample and limitations

Sample size and profile
We directly engaged with 322 individuals from Safe Network’s various stakeholder groups. The table below shows the number of individuals involved via each activity.
### Evaluation activity | Individuals
---|---
Survey of VCS organisations | 255
Interviews with VCS organisations | 25
Survey of Safe Network Champions | 26
Interviews with Safe Network Champions | 15
Interviews with CAPT’s Making the Link mentees | 3
Interviews with LSCB representatives | 11
Interviews with national organisations | 4
Interviews with Safe Network team/advisory group members | 4
**Total** | **343***

(Note: we directly involved 322 individuals, not 343, as 21 individuals participated in more than one way – for instance, taking part in both a survey and an interview.)

Across all fieldwork activities we achieved a sample with the following characteristics:

- 267 organisations, of which 182 (68%) were VCS frontline organisations, and 51 (19%) infrastructure/second-tier VCS organisations. The remainder (34, 13%) were individuals or organisations in the private, independent or statutory sector.
- 63% of VCS organisations were small/medium (under 15 paid staff).
- 195 organisations had accessed Safe Network resources, 189 had accessed advice and information and 77 had accessed Safe Network training. 231 had accessed more than one element of Safe Network’s support.
- Of the 34 Champions we engaged, 30 were based in local infrastructure organisations and 4 in national or regional subsector/membership organisations.
- We interviewed 10 LSCB representatives from across eight of the nine regions.

**Sample limitations**

Though we had hoped to engage more VCS organisations (at least 300), we did achieve a sample broadly representative of the diversity of organisations (in terms of type, size and location) that Safe Network has supported over the past two years. Also, as the profile data above suggests, the VCS organisations engaged within our fieldwork had used all elements of Safe Network’s support. A relatively small number of those we surveyed had accessed training, and likewise a small number had accessed support from Safe Network staff or Champions, so we sought to strengthen our findings in these areas where our sample was small, by exploring correlations with data from other sources. For instance, we conducted analyses of evaluation forms completed by groups immediately after training/events, including after local events co-delivered by Champions.

Our sample of Champions engaged via our online survey was likewise smaller than we had hoped (n=26). We therefore boosted this sample by increasing the number of Champions we interviewed from the seven we originally planned to fifteen.
3. Findings – programme delivery and reach

In this section of our report we consider Safe Network’s effectiveness, looking at:

- what has been delivered and how far delivery targets have been achieved
- the quality of delivery and levels of user satisfaction
- responsiveness to changing needs and context
- who has been reached, and how far priority target groups have been reached.

Key findings

- More than 570,000 individuals have received safeguarding information or advice from Safe Network via its websites and its central enquiry service. Around 8,000 receive regular updates and news via one of the Network’s monthly e-bulletins, and almost 5,000 individuals have also taken part in workshops, training and other Safe Network events around the country.

- A network of 80 safeguarding Champions around the country have actively promoted and supported good practice within the VCS using Safe Network resources. These Champions have supported around 1,200 organisations with information, advice and training.

- By working through an extensive network of local and national partners; producing targeted resources; and recruiting locally-networked Champions the Network has had some success in reaching those organisations who might most need safeguarding support, including those working with vulnerable or disadvantaged young people; those who are new to work with young people; and those who have traditionally had poor access to other sources of safeguarding support such as very small, volunteer-led organisations.

- The Network has engaged with almost 100 LSCBs and local commissioners to support their work to promote and ensure good safeguarding practice in their local areas. It has supported around 500 local commissioners and senior practitioners across both statutory and voluntary sectors to come together through workshops, training and events on aspects of safeguarding, child safety and accident prevention and has helped them plan how to address these issues at a strategic as well as at a delivery level. It has undertaken more in-depth programmes of work with 59 LSCBs, and has offered mentoring support to strategic accident prevention leads in 4 areas.

- User satisfaction levels are exceptionally high across all areas of the Network’s programme of work, and across all stakeholder groups. This is chiefly explained by the accessibility and quality of resources, their relevance to the sector, and the expertise, skills and commitment of Safe Network staff.

- Safe Network partners have demonstrated a high level of responsiveness to changes in their stakeholders’ needs, to feedback from their stakeholders, and to changes in the external context for their work. This has helped ensure that the Network’s programme of activities has focused on what is most needed and most relevant for the sector.
3.1 Achieving delivery targets

Our analysis of Safe Network’s own output monitoring data and reporting shows that the programme has delivered across all its planned objectives, and has achieved or exceeded most of its agreed delivery targets.

Objective 1: Website and resources

- Between April 2011 and March 2013, the Safe Network website was visited almost 696,000 times by 576,000 unique users. In the same period, safeguarding resources on the site were downloaded almost 87,000 times, including over 10,000 Safe Network Standards information resources and over 21,000 resources from the Standards toolbox.
- The Making the Link website has had more than 46,000 visits, comprising 34,600 unique visitors.
- Both websites have been regularly updated to include information on the latest policy and good practice guidance.
- Information on good practice in safeguarding has been shared via monthly Safe Network e-bulletins (the March 2013 version went out to over 9,300 subscribers), and information on good practice in accident prevention has been shared via monthly Making the Link e-newsletters (reaching more than 3,600 subscribers). CAPT has also published 13 good practice case studies, 8 topic briefings and 9 ‘learning nuggets’ on the Making the Link website. More than 3,700 copies of these resources were downloaded.

Within this objective, almost all delivery targets were either met or exceeded. Both websites have been accessed more often than was originally anticipated, and the overall target to provide access to free safeguarding resources has been met – though some resources have been accessed less than originally anticipated (the ‘Keeping our Children Safe’ CD-Rom and Are They Safe?) while others (the Standards and case studies) have been downloaded far more than anticipated.

Objective 2: VCS training and events

- RDMs and Champions have been involved in more than 250 events across all nine English regions, engaging and informing more than 4,500 participants on a range of safeguarding topics and promoting Safe Network resources. These have involved all three Network partners and have ranged from local launch events, workshops and training to regional conferences and national showcase events.
- In addition to training delivered by RDMs or Champions, almost 8,500 free or low cost Educare e-learning safeguarding training programmes were distributed to VCS organisations between April 2011 and March 2013.

Safe Network has significantly exceeded its targets to reach 2,000 frontline groups via training, workshops and events and to reach 5,500 organisations via online training opportunities, reaching more than 12,000 organisations in total via its events and training.
Objective 3: Advice and support on safeguarding issues

- The central team’s enquiry service has responded to almost 1,100 enquiries since April 2011. We do not have a detailed breakdown of the nature of these enquiries but we know that though 529 were brief, relatively straightforward questions, 570 contacts related to more detailed or complex enquiries.
- RDMs and Champions have also been involved in offering direct advice and support to organisations over and above their work to deliver training and events.

The Network has exceeded its target to offer advice and support to more than 600 groups via its enquiry service.

Objective 4: A network of safeguarding Champions

- Since April 2011 the Network has recruited 80 Safe Network Champions, the majority of whom come from local second tier/infrastructure VCS organisations. It has a further 38 ‘pending’ Champions (i.e., awaiting formal sign-up and/or training) and RDMs around the country are in touch with many more ‘supporters’ of Safe Network – staff within local infrastructure organisations who promote and signpost groups to Safe Network but without having opted to be a Champion. Over the past two years, 13 Champions have ‘resigned’, most usually for reasons related to a change of job or job role.
- Champions, once signed up, have benefited from core training on the Standards. Many have also received training and briefings to help them stay up-to-date with legal and policy developments, and/or training to help them develop their skills in areas such as facilitation and training, negotiating and influencing.
- Champions have supported approximately 1,200 frontline organisations, through one-to-one advice and signposting, distribution of and familiarisation with safeguarding resources, workshops and events. Many have also supported work to engage with LSCBs and local commissioners on VCS safeguarding issues.

The overall target to recruit 150 Champions has not been achieved and the Network has struggled to recruit and retain Champions for a number of reasons. Nonetheless the target for the number of organisations to be supported by Champions has been reached, and a looser ‘network’ of Safe Network supporters within infrastructure organisations in some areas is fulfilling a similar role to that of officially registered Champions.

Objective 5: Working with local decision-makers

- Children England and its team of RDMs have worked with almost 100 LSCBs including offering support, guidance on the use of the Standards in local areas, developing tailored resources and ‘bespoke’ local versions of the Standards, and/or organising training and events.
- More in-depth development work has taken place in 59 local areas, generally with a focus on the Standards and/or the development of a Champions programme, and always involving some degree of partnership working between local authorities or LSCBs and their local VCS.
- Mentoring support on childhood accident prevention has been developed in four local authority areas (Hull, Wandsworth, Newcastle and Bradford).
310 senior practitioners and commissioners across ten local authority areas have attended child accident prevention training workshops (12 events held), and a further 170 have attended child accident prevention master classes on issues including the new public health agenda, child poverty, neglect, public health commissioning and accident prevention for the under-5s (7 events held).

CAPT’s Making the Link project produced two resources specifically aimed at promoting greater recognition and involvement of the VCS within local commissioning. Their briefings, Guide to Commissioning (Working in Partnership) and Making the Case for working with the VCS, reinforced important Safe Network messages about the value of working with and supporting the VCS in work to keep children safe from harm. Though only very recently made available at the time of our evaluation, these resources have been viewed and/or downloaded more than 400 times.

Safe Network’s quarterly bulletins for LSCBs and Champions have covered a range of safeguarding-related topics and shared examples of good practice from around the country.

All targets within this objective have been met or exceeded, with a higher level of in-depth work and development work with LSCBs than was originally planned.

Objective 6: Partnership work with national infrastructure organisations

The Network has engaged with more than 20 national infrastructure organisations (eg, membership and umbrella organisations). It has worked with them on developing new resources and guidance; updating Safe Network materials; promoting safeguarding across different sub-sectors of the VCS; and on more strategic work to strengthen the VCS ‘voice’ on safeguarding issues nationally.

The Network has achieved its target to work in partnership with at least 15 national/umbrella organisations.

Objective 7: Engaging with parents and carers

The Network has created and regularly updated its own dedicated web pages for parents and carers. These have links to other organisations and resources dealing with topics such as personal safety, internet safety, bullying, child abuse, keeping children safe in activities in their communities and specific information on disabilities, faith, and safeguarding in BME communities. The parents and carers pages have been viewed more than 8,600 times in the past two years.

The Network has also worked with other organisations to produce some of the information for Safe Network’s parents/carers page, but also to produce information for others’ websites that more explicitly targets parents and carers – for instance producing a safeguarding page for the popular Netmums website.

Parents and carers have been involved in consultation activities as resources have been developed or updated, including in the consultation for the 2012 update to the Are They Safe? pack.

No targets were set for this area of work.
3.2 Quality and user satisfaction

An analysis of Safe Network monitoring data, combined with our own survey data, has revealed very high levels of user satisfaction and high ratings for the quality of Safe Network’s programme across all delivery areas.

Satisfaction with Safe Network websites

In our online survey of VCS organisations, 178 individuals had visited the Safe Network website, of whom 97% rated the site as excellent or good. Fewer respondents (53) had visited the Making the Link website, but again 98% of these rated it as excellent or good. To widen our sample we also conducted an analysis of partners’ feedback data for both sites. In each instance this confirmed our finding of very high levels of satisfaction with both websites and online resources:

- The Safe Network site routinely gives visitors the opportunity to give feedback via an online survey tool. We analysed one year’s feedback (March 2012-February 2013) from 295 website visitors and found that 78% rated the website at 7 out of 10 or above and 89% of all comments left were positive.
- An online feedback survey conducted with visitors to the Making the Link website between October and December 2012, found that 88% were able to find what they were looking for and 77% reported high levels of satisfaction.

We thematically analysed the positive feedback from Safe Network website users and identified the factors most commonly linked to high satisfaction as ease of use, the clear and up-to-date nature of the information, the accessible and practical nature of information given, and the fact that resources were free. The illustration below captures the words most commonly used to describe people’s experience of using the site. The words almost exactly mirror the analysis of feedback on the Making the Link website where ease of use, up-to-date, helpful and reliable information were the most common factors linked to high satisfaction ratings.

Analysis of open feedback – Safe Network website feedback forms
The Making the Link website is fantastic … All the updated statistics on the numbers and costs of unintentional injury are great and will be of enormous help going forward in continuing to raise the profile of the agenda and gaining multi-agency sign-up.

If any of the staff come to me and say they’re not sure about anything, I can just say, no, just go to the Safe Network site and see what they’re saying and we just can stick with that … We can have a look at it and have faith in it. We can trust that it’s the right information.

We encountered very little negative feedback from any stakeholder groups about the Safe Network websites or resources. In almost all cases negative feedback was either because someone could not find what they wanted from the website or because of a technical problem with the website, registration processes or downloads.

In our interviews a small number of both Champions and frontline organisations mentioned issues with website registration. Several felt that the need to register and then enter additional information to download resources was a barrier either for them, or, they feared, a barrier for others, and in particular very small organisations. While Champions largely appreciated why the Network requires registration and logging-in (so that it can monitor use of its resources), this was nonetheless perceived as a potential barrier and as something that makes the site and resources less accessible.

I do think the registration thing is quite irritating … because when you’re a volunteer, you just don’t have the time and you need to get to what you want quickly. This seems like it would be very off-putting to me.

We were not able to assess whether registration has acted as a barrier to accessing the site, but certainly this was not backed up by the Network’s data on website registrations which shows that traffic to the site has seen the same rate of increase comparing the period both before and after the registration requirement was introduced midway through 2011.

A few respondents, though a very small minority, found the site complex and hard to navigate:

The Safe Network website contains some very good resources and information but I find it quite complex and difficult to navigate and find things that I have come across previously. It is for the latter reason that I have only rated it average. I always feel the need to encourage groups not to give up if they also find it difficult, and I take time to point out some of the gems it contains.

Satisfaction with Safe Network resources

In our online survey we asked organisations to rate their satisfaction with Safe Network resources. This included the Are They Safe? pack, the ‘Keeping our Children Safe’ CD-Rom and Safeguarding Standards resources. Of the 255 respondents, 177 had used one or more of the resources listed. They were asked to rate the resources in terms of ‘usefulness of content’ and ‘ease of use’. Between 97
and 100% of respondents rated the resources as either good or excellent in terms of both usefulness and ease of use.

Of the 52 survey respondents who chose to explain their ratings, the primary reasons given for high ratings were again; accessibility, relevance and quality of the materials. Within our qualitative interviewing, and across all stakeholder groups, we found the same themes emerged. In interviews when accessibility was mentioned, it was specifically in relation to the user-friendly format and language of resources (plain English, jargon-free, and reassuring) and the fact that resources are mostly free.

One of the things that I think is important is that it isn’t laid out so as to be too daunting or frightening. There’s a lot to take in and it is an issue that generates concern and fear … it’s great that it isn’t too prescriptive and it presents things in a way so you don’t feel overwhelmed.

Some LSCB standards are no different to the Safe Network guidance in terms of content, but it’s the language between the two - that’s where there can be a massive difference. This is not to be derogatory, not to suggest that a volunteer couldn’t read what you could call ‘statutory language’, but people are so short on time so the information needs to be really simple and accessible.

The sample policy documents are very concise and simple to use, and easily adaptable to suit individual organisations.

Interview respondents almost universally regarded the Network’s materials as up-to-date, authoritative, well-written, and comprehensive, with many also commenting on the usefulness of links made within resources to other complementary sources of information and advice:

Safe Network resources allow me to provide authoritative advice to groups that are working with young people. The electronic resources on the website are the most useful as these are the most up-to-date, take no space to store, and the link can be immediately forwarded to enquirers at no cost to our organisation.

We need someone to collate the evidence around the country and good practice … put it out there and share it … I think the (Making the Link) website … guidance, case studies, links … it’s brilliant for that.

Satisfaction with Safe Network training and/or events
A relatively small number of our survey respondents, some 73 individuals, had attended Safe Network training or events, including Educare (online learning), Safe Network safeguarding training, or other safeguarding events, presentations or workshops. The satisfaction rating across all three areas of training was between 94 and 97%.

We explored satisfaction with training in more depth by conducting an analysis of collated feedback data from a sample of Safe Network events. We looked at evaluation data from 20 events in 2012-13 involving more than 280 participants.
From this sample we confirmed the high levels of satisfaction found within our online survey, with 94% satisfaction with the content and delivery of training/events, and 84% overall reporting that the training/event had met its objectives. An earlier Safe Network analysis of 13 events over an earlier period found that 94% of participants (n=266) felt the objectives of the training had been achieved and 98% expressed satisfaction with both the delivery and content (ie rating them as good or excellent).

These consistently high ratings were further confirmed within our qualitative interviewing across all stakeholder groups, with frontline VCS organisations, LSCB representatives, Champions and CAPT mentees all reporting high levels of satisfaction with the Network’s training.

High satisfaction ratings with training and events were largely explained by the accessibility of the information, particularly for those fairly new to safeguarding, but also a high proportion of those trained valued the fact that the training has been very practical and engaging, and many commented on the knowledge and skills of the facilitators (Safe Network staff). The diagram below graphically illustrates the main factors linked to high satisfaction levels.

Analysis of training feedback – 2012-13

I loved the online training … really easy to follow, very interactive, good case studies.

These trustees are mainly local people. The majority have had no training of any sort on anything in their lives and they really found it useful and they’ve been doing the training in bite-size chunks, you just can’t do whole days with them… but they absolutely loved it.

Encouraging, informative and useful … The event was most beneficial at such a crucial time of change and impact on the sector.

It was about the new vetting and barring … It was very helpful, it brought me up to date with all the legislation, it just gave me the information we needed really to make sure we were on track.
Where we found less than positive feedback about Safe Network events or training it was rarely about the content – though sometimes about the balance between elements of the content within a programme, or identifying one workshop within a wider event that was not perceived to be as good or useful as others, but more usually it was negative feedback about practical issues (eg, problems with sound, venue or space).

Satisfaction with Safe Network information and advice/development work

As with other areas of the Safe Network programme, we found those who had received information and/or advice were overwhelmingly positive about its quality and usefulness. Within our survey of VCS organisations, information and advice services received satisfaction ratings of between 88-94%.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information/advice service</th>
<th>Satisfaction rating (good or excellent)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Safe Network enquiry service</td>
<td>94% (n=36)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safe network e-bulletin</td>
<td>93% (n=147)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advice from Safe Network staff /representative</td>
<td>93% (n=60)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making the Link (accident prevention) e-bulletin</td>
<td>88% (n=40)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

High satisfaction ratings with this element of the programme were largely linked to the relevance and usefulness of information shared (whether by email or in person), and the knowledge, expertise and commitment of staff involved in the delivery of Safe Network services. A majority of the VCS staff and trustees we spoke to also mentioned feeling able to trust the information they were being given, feeling that it was up-to-date and could be relied on.

The e-bulletin’s very helpful because it has up-to-date changes in legislation. When you’re working with children and young people it’s changing all the time! You need to be able to know you’re up to date with legislation.

All stakeholders who had encountered Safe Network staff had a very high regard for the level of customer service and support offered. Staff, and in particular RDMs and the CAPT Making the Link team, were variously described as highly knowledgeable, supportive and committed, and as delivering over and above expectations. Though less frequently encountered by participants in our evaluation, feedback about the central enquiry team was likewise very positive.

I felt very comfortable and un-pressured making enquiries about courses and support. The aftercare of customer service was perfect, not full-on … staff were … polite, professional and encouraging.

They’re very good at responding, usually very promptly, to any questions I ask them, and if they don’t know, they know a man who does, so then they’re signposting or referring me on. I appreciate that.
They do what they say they’ll do. To be honest their support and the mentoring has exceeded our expectations.

Few areas for improvement were raised by those who had received information or advice from the Network. These were generally requests for more of some element of the programme, eg, more case studies, learning resources practical tools or local support, or for more clarity on what support could be accessed locally.

It would be good to have more practical examples of things you can try … So with a case study someone might have more success than someone else but you don’t get to understand why, what helped them. You wouldn’t know why it works. … It’s helpful to hear about good practice, but if someone has been doing just what you’re doing but it just happened to work for them, it doesn’t move you any further forward.

In some larger areas they might have a clear work programme, but we haven’t. It would be good to know what the priorities are …We’re happy as a Board to support what they’re doing but what is the priority? What are the expectations of Champions? What else can they offer?

CAPT have some fantastic tools but I wish they had a good mentoring tool, a menu of things they can help you with, so that you could go through and say, “ah, that would be useful, could you show me how to do that?”

3.3 Ensuring programme responsiveness and relevance

Safe Network partners have demonstrated a high level of responsiveness to changes in their stakeholders’ needs, to feedback from stakeholders, and to changes in the external context.

Responding to changes in the external context

Over the past two years Safe Network has been active in responding to changes in the context for its work. Indeed, changes in legislation, policy and government guidance on best practice have significantly shaped the information and resources offered and the focus of events. Our analysis found that a high proportion of what has been offered has focused on enabling VCS organisations (and those who support and fund them) to keep abreast of changes in legal and best practice guidance on safeguarding.

We list below some examples of the way in which the Network has responded to changes in the context for its work.

- In late 2011 the Network began to use Twitter to introduce greater interactivity to its sites – for both the Making the Link and main Safe Network sites. It has used this to hold ‘surgeries’ on current policy and legal issues to help groups raise questions and concerns about new developments.
The Safe Network e-newsletter and e-bulletins (including a general e-newsletter for the VCS, one for LSCB Business Managers, one for Champions and a Making the Link e-bulletin) have continued to provide regular updates on the latest policy and practice issues, tailored to meet the needs of different audiences. These have reached more than 10,000 recipients each month.

Early in 2012 the Safe Network Standards were revised to reflect government policy (and feedback from VCS stakeholders), with the addition of information on online safety and cyber-bullying, and additional information on safer activities following input from CAPT. The revised Standards were launched in March 2012 and a 2013 edition has been developed for launch in the spring of 2013.

The Are They Safe? guide was also updated in 2012 to reflect changes in the safeguarding landscape, with the new version released in November 2012.

CAPT has responded to significant changes in the commissioning landscape throughout all parts of its Making the Link programme, including producing regular news updates on accident prevention in the light of the changing role of public health within commissioning, and working closely with local partners to adapt to changes in structures, staffing and commissioning arrangements.

Throughout the summer of 2012 the Network ran a programme of events called Adapting to Change. These seminars shared information with Champions, LSCBs and VCS infrastructure support providers on safer recruitment following the Protection of Freedoms Act and proposed changes in Disclosure and Barring arrangements. They also provided the opportunity for the VCS to be involved in the consultation process on the forthcoming Working Together guidance and associated safeguarding documents. The events took place across the country, and 160 people attended. Following these events Safe Network provided the government with a document outlining VCS views as part of the consultation process.

Also in the summer of 2012 the Network ran four information sessions aimed at keeping groups up to date with proposals for the DBS. These reached 101 participants.

In early 2013 all three Safe Network partners worked alongside local partners to run two free events focused on the changing policy context for safeguarding, disclosure and barring and working together. These events titled Risk, Reality and Reform: Delivering Effective Safeguarding Together were aimed at VCS managers and infrastructure staff, statutory bodies and commissioners and LSCB representatives. They engaged more than 50 individuals.

In March 2013 Safe Network held their first safeguarding webinars – three webinars were offered. These focused on ‘Safer Recruitment, Disclosure and Barring’, ‘Online Safety’ and ‘Best Safeguarding Practice’. 111 participants made use of 184 places across the three sessions.

The Network has not only kept pace with the changing policy context for its work, but has also done well in sharing information across the sector so that others are kept up-to-date and informed. The Network has been the key point of contact for thousands of VCS organisations, many of whom acknowledge that they might otherwise have struggled to keep pace with the changes taking place over the last two years:
There was a lot of fear and anxiety, there were newspaper headlines about organisations being sued after accidents, and confusion about the implications of the ISA and vetting and barring. Safe Network has very much become the place to go to help us understand and keep up to date with all the changes that are happening.

Ensuring that support is appropriate and relevant for target markets

All three partners have regularly sought and responded to feedback from their stakeholders, and have tried to engage them to ensure that the services and activities offered are appropriate to their needs. Safe Network Champions were particularly aware of this process, with several reporting that their views about resources, based on experience ‘from the frontline’, had been taken into account when any updates to resources were planned. Some were also engaged at different points as ‘critical readers’ as new resources were being developed.

Through delivering the workshops there were a few things that member organisations highlighted as gaps and then I fed that back … and that was taken on board … they wanted more detail on health and safety because they thought that would be helpful, so I fed that back to the trainer on the champion’s course and they took that into account. They do listen to what’s coming up from the ground in that way.

They would always consult with us all the way along through our Children and Young People’s Network, so we were able to feed in information and ideas … as they developed new resources.

All three partners gather and systematically analyse and reflect on feedback from training participants. Both websites have feedback sections and use online survey methods to gather visitors’ feedback on their visit to the site and/or resources downloaded. All feedback is then taken to a regular website/e-newsletter content planning meeting and considered as part of forward planning. Consultation is also often built into the Network’s events as appropriate – for instance, dedicated time was set aside during the Adapting to Change (Working Together) series of seminars to gather participants’ views on the Network’s future plans and what it should offer.

We also found evidence that where the Network has recognised that other organisations may have more knowledge and expertise in certain areas than it has across the partnership, it has then worked closely with those organisations to ensure that its resources are the best they can be. For instance, when Are They Safe? was being updated, Safe Network worked with Stonewall, Out and About, the Race Equality Foundation and Home-Start UK to ensure that the updated resource would really meet the needs of disabled young people, LGBT young people and BME communities. During a Safe Network website update, the Central Team worked closely with the national organisation Beat Bullying. Beat Bullying helped the Network create specialist information on the Safe Network website and shared their expertise in relation to cyber-bullying and online safety.

It was very useful to us working with these other organisations … for instance Out and About came up with the idea of developing a wallchart so that groups could follow their progress, so that’s one of the things we did and that’s gone down well.
3.4 Reach – including to identified priority groups

Safe Network aims to offer accessible safeguarding support across all parts of the VCS but has a particular interest in targeting groups identified as priority and/or ‘hard to reach’, those who work with the most vulnerable or disadvantaged young people, and organisations who may not be engaged with or aware of mainstream safeguarding support and training. These include small volunteer-led organisations, those working in isolated rural areas, black and minority (BME) and refugee groups, and those for whom work with children and young people is new or is not their primary focus.

The Network has adopted three main methods to ensure that it reaches its intended beneficiaries:

- Developing targeted resources that are accessible and relevant to particular ‘markets’.
- Partnerships with organisations more closely connected with priority groups.
- Recruiting and supporting Champions who are well connected with local communities and/or with ‘hard to reach’ groups.

Developing targeted resources

The Network’s approach to ensuring a good reach to identified priority groups has included targeting resources for particular types of organisation, or for organisations working with vulnerable young people. For instance, in the last two years it has:

- developed information and guidance for organisations working with deaf young people which has been viewed almost 1,400 times
- developed guidance for organisations working with young people with mental health problems – viewed more than 2,200 times
- developed new website resources on BME issues - viewed around 2,500 times
- developed new web-based information on faith issues - viewed more than 1,600 times
- developed a new website page and resources about lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) issues - viewed more than 3,500 times
- worked with the National Federation of Young Farmers’ Clubs to develop information for those working within rural communities - more than 500 views.

We cannot draw from this any conclusion about the actual number of individuals who have accessed these resources, but the significant number of visits and views does suggest that the information is needed, and feedback from website visitors suggests that it is appreciated and is being found useful.

Valuable information on various child protection issues. As I work with deaf children I am particularly pleased to see specific information for their needs. Well done!
I thought it was good that they have resources specifically for BME communities. The issues can be different and you need cultural awareness and they’re reflecting that.

Partnering with specialist, subsector or membership organisations

Safe Network has worked closely with a number of specialist organisations, membership and umbrella organisations who work across subsectors or nationally, in order to enable a better ‘reach’ for the programme. This work has included:

- agreeing joint signposting/ referral processes
- promoting each other’s services
- attending or supporting each other’s’ activities and events
- creating joint resources.

For example, the Network worked closely with Netmums to enable it to share safeguarding information with more parents/carers; it worked both regionally and nationally with the Churches Child Protection Advisory Service (CCPAS) to help it reach out to Church and faith groups, and with the National Resource Centre for Supplementary Education (NRSCE) to reach out to staff and volunteers within supplementary schools.

The Network has also worked with membership organisations to help it reach organisations whose primary focus may not be children/young people and who therefore may not be as connected in to local safeguarding support as children and young people’s organisations. For example it has worked with membership organisations like the Brass Bands Federation, Artswork and the National Arts Forum to increase its reach to music and arts organisations and individuals working with young people in the arts.

The number of organisations and individuals reached through this partnership work is hard to quantify but feedback from these respective partners about their work with Safe Network suggests that:

- 16,000 Churches and faith groups received Safe Network information via the CCPAS Caring Newsletter in December 2012.
- More than 300 arts workers have attended events/training based in part on Safe Network materials, and more than 6,000 youth arts practitioners (members of the England National Youth Arts Network) have received information about the Network and safeguarding updates based on Safe Network information, via a monthly newsletter for members.
- 327 supplementary school staff/volunteers have received training based in part on Safe Network materials and have been signposted to Safe Network as a part of the process of acquiring a supplementary schools quality mark.
- More than 30 brass bands have been signposted to Safe Network and/or have received safeguarding information/training using adapted Safe Network materials and the Network has engaged with the informal governing body for brass bands in England, Brass Band England to explore the possibility of a national rollout of the Standards.
The role of Champions in enabling Safe Network to reach its target groups

An essential criterion for Safe Network Champions is that they must have good links into their communities, and perhaps for this reason, the work done by Champions, the training, support and advice they have offered at a local level, has performed a vital role in enabling the Network to reach and engage with its priority groups. Local Champions have variously been involved in the following activities to ensure a good reach for Safe Network to VCS organisations:

- Signposting and promoting the Standards
- Delivering or co-delivering workshops, training and events
- Offering 1-2-1 support for small organisations
- Tailoring Safe Network resources/training for local circumstances.

Safe Network monitoring data shows that, over the last two years, Champions have engaged more than 1,200 organisations through events and training, with thousands more signposted to Safe Network via mailings, newsletters and local websites.

The 34 Champions who took part in our evaluation were more involved in signposting and events than in offering 1-2-1 support. Champions’ feedback and reports to Safe Network suggest that a majority of the organisations they have supported have been precisely the small organisations the Network wanted to prioritise, and our findings support this - with all local Champions in our sample reporting working solely or primarily with small organisations with under 15 staff, and 80% working primarily with organisations with 0-5 staff. The Champions we interviewed saw their role as key in supporting the kinds of groups that would not or cannot access support from their LSCB or other sources either because of lack of awareness, lack of appropriateness, or lack of time/resources.

We have about 50 members … We were talking about small and medium-sized organisations and I think people have a different idea of small and medium-sized. Our clubs almost come into a mini category. When people said small I’m thinking two people opening up a village hall for a group of ten young people.

I was working with refugee community organisations and I had some concerns with these groups particularly because they’re new communities and probably didn’t have the awareness that some of the more traditional organisations working with children and young people have. I’ve now helped a lot of groups in refugee communities using the Safe Network materials who would not have been able to access that help via our LSCB. You really need to be very determined to do their (LSCB) training, they don’t make it easy for voluntary groups, particularly those where English is not their first language.

Champions have played an important role in ensuring that groups are not just aware of the support available but are also taking it up. A majority of Champions feel that, although the Safe Network resources are very accessible, face-to-face support is still needed by some groups.

For some groups, delivering it as online provision is not going to do it. If that were to be all there was then we’d have to accept we couldn’t
engage with these groups, or we’d have to find another way to do it.

I feel strongly that you need some kind of physical link between the materials and the groups. Not everybody is motivated to go away, or has the time, to do this on their own, so that was my role. Some of the materials are very detailed and thorough … and some of the stuff involves a lot of time commitment and in my experience a lot of groups don’t have that time … most of the groups I work with, have no paid staff … like out-of-school clubs that might meet Saturday morning, but everybody’s a volunteer and they have a day job Monday to Friday, so they don’t have the time to commit.

The evidence of our evaluation suggests that with the right resourcing and support Champions can make a significant difference to the reach of Safe Network in a local area, and to the level of engagement with small organisations and ‘hard to reach’ groups. However, some Champions have been able to be far more active and successful in reaching out to ‘hard to reach’ groups than others. Though a number of different factors have influenced Champions’ ability to reach and engage VCS groups, those who have been able to do more have tended to be those who have a safeguarding role included within their main job role rather than it being an ‘add on’ within a more generic development worker or similar role.

I’m lucky in the sense this is a part of my job so I have the support to do it. I think where you’ll find people struggle is if they are taking it on but it isn’t at the core of what they do. Most of us who would turn up at things now … are the ones whose job this is anyway.

I’d say we have a core of very active Champions who are achieving a lot, but quite a few who are not able to do as much and that’s something for us to review and think about for the future.

### 3.5 Case studies – programme delivery

The three case studies that follow illustrate how Safe Network has worked with its partners to meet the needs of its priority groups, VCS organisations that might otherwise ‘fall through the net’ of local safeguarding provision.

They demonstrate how Safe Network has worked with national and local partners to reach out to faith groups and small groups that are unregulated and largely volunteer-led – groups who while delivering excellent services, may be less aware of the need to consider safeguarding of children and young people or less aware what safeguarding implications are for their organisation and how local safeguarding arrangements work. They also strongly demonstrate the role and value of Champions in enabling the Network to have a good reach to its target beneficiaries.
Case Study 1 – reaching faith and minority communities

Safe Network has worked with a number of agencies in Luton to develop a network of Champions within local faith and minority groups. The project has grown over time and has become part of wider joint work between the LSCB and Safe Network to quality assure safeguarding practice across the local VCS.

Background

In 2011 Luton Safeguarding Children’s Board (LSCB) identified a need for tailored support to enable local faith and minority groups to better understand safeguarding issues and responsibilities. The SAFE pilot project, managed by Voluntary Action Luton (VAL), was set up to address this need by developing a network of Champions from within local communities. SAFE ran from November 2011 – March 2012. It was funded by the Children’s Workforce Development Council and Prevent (a project to divert young people from radicalisation and extremism) and supported by the Safe Network RDM and the LSCB’s Learning and Development Lead.

The work

Thirty representatives of local independent churches and madrassahs were offered training and support to enable them to become safeguarding Champions, including a one-day course run by Safe Network and the LSCB, RDM support to use the Safeguarding Standards and other materials, and monthly network/support meetings with input from key local staff including the LADO. Of the 30 trainees, 14 continued as Champions, committed to sharing their learning with other organisations and one has since passed the Local Authority’s approved training-the-trainer course.

Following a positive evaluation of the project, the LSCB was keen to continue the work so it set up a Faith Communities task and finish group with representation from Safe Network to develop a phase 2. This was launched in November 2012 at an event attended by around 30 VCS providers, with several of these subsequently expressing an interest in becoming local Champions.

Outcomes achieved

Increased knowledge and skills

A majority of the Champions reported improved safeguarding confidence, knowledge and understanding after their training, and later also reported tangible changes within their organisations - completing action plans following self-assessment; updating policies; sharing information with colleagues; and updating recruitment processes. The LSCB Business Manager describes groups’ progress since the project started:

> Their perception of safeguarding has radically changed, … far more understanding of …what they need to do, referral processes, who people are, how to keep their organisations as safe as they can be … more understanding that they have a responsibility in all this.

Enhanced LSCB capacity to engage with faith and minority groups

The LSCB feels Safe Network’s support had added value to their work with the VCS:
It’s really helpful to be able to signpost to them … we can’t be a one-stop shop for everything so now at least we know there’s support there for the smaller organisations …. We can refer and trust that their model will keep them on the right path. They’ve brought their expertise with the sector to our work and helped us achieve our goals.

A new level of engagement with safeguarding issues
The LSCB Learning and Development Lead has also seen a wider project impact:

As a result of … the project we are definitely now seeing people coming forward from the different church and faith groups saying ‘we want to talk to you about other issues’ … It’s about safeguarding now being seen perhaps as something we can talk openly about. It’s allowing us to have a dialogue … about safeguarding issues concerning people in their communities.

The future
Having seen the positive impact of using the Standards within the pilot, the LSCB signposts to Safe Network via its training and its website. It has formally endorsed the Standards, and has worked with Safe Network to create a local ‘Lutonised’ version. So, alongside planning for phase 2 of the Champions project, LSCB and Safe Network have developed a bespoke version of the Standards – ‘topped and tailed’ with important local information and branded jointly as a LSCB and Safe Network resource. For the future it is hoped this resource, supported by a growing network of Champions, will drive further improvements in safeguarding practice.

Learning

A local commitment to partnership working: Success in Luton has been heavily dependent on LSCB commitment to work in partnership to create a sustainable framework to support faith and minority groups. Safe Network’s involvement in its Safeguarding in Faith Communities subgroup is an example of this, and throughout the project LSCB staff and the RDM worked closely and effectively together.

The RDM role: All local stakeholders report that the support of The Safe Network RDM has been an important factor in the success of the project:

She was very hands on … offering extra guidance for people who were struggling, to really make champions of this particular cohort.

Accessibility of Safe Network materials: The clear accessible nature of the Safe Network materials was a factor in the successful engagement of the Champions and has contributed to Luton’s commitment to using them more widely across the sector.

The materials were very good … simple and straightforward … and people definitely found them easy to access.

Realistic timescales: Though positive outcomes have been achieved, important learning has been about the need to allow a realistic timeframe to develop this type of project – dependent on volunteers’ time and availability. It was not always easy for Champions to sustain their commitment and this is the reality of a project seeking to engage individuals active in the community and giving their time voluntarily.
Case Study 2 – reaching un-regulated education providers

Safe Network worked with the National Resource Centre for Supplementary Education (NRCSE) to improve safeguarding practice in supplementary schools. Through joint safeguarding training linked to NRCSE’s own quality standards, and through NRCSE’s support for local Safe Network Champions, supplementary schools are benefiting from tailored support appropriate to their needs.

Background

NRCSE provides advice and guidance to improve the quality of supplementary school provision. Supplementary schools offer out-of-school-hours educational opportunities for children and young people, many of whom come from minority ethnic and migrant communities. They are largely non-regulated, and often lack support and guidance, in part because many are run by volunteers who are themselves members of recently arrived migrant communities and are therefore not always well networked or connected to sources of support in their local area.

Many supplementary schools struggle with safeguarding as they can be unaware of their responsibilities, unfamiliar with systems and procedures in the UK and with how things work, or may struggle to implement good practice because of the practical difficulties they face in their education setting, for instance, as a result of understaffing or a lack of support. NRCSE started working with Safe Network to help the organisation address this need as part of wider work they were already undertaking on quality assurance within supplementary schools.

The work

The work with Safe Network focused on training for supplementary school staff, and developing a cohort of Champions from within NRCSE’s team of Mentors who were active in supporting schools across London.

Training

Tailored safeguarding training for supplementary schools was co-developed by NRCSE and their local Safe Network Regional Development Manager (RDM), adapted from Safe Network materials. This was delivered by NRCSE around the country, sometimes alongside the RDM.

In total 23 one-day courses were delivered, reaching 327 supplementary school staff/volunteers. The training was designed to complement rather than replace any of the LSCB training offers in local areas, and LSCB representatives were invited to attend to improve awareness and communication between LSCBs and schools in their area.

Champions

NRCSE Mentors were enrolled as Safe Network Champions, after receiving training that had been specially co-designed and delivered by NRCSE and Safe Network. The Mentors/Champions then offered tailored safeguarding support to supplementary schools at the local level across eight London boroughs, supporting schools to achieve quality standards and to improve their safeguarding practice.
As just one example of the work of these Mentors/Champions, in Barnet, the local NRCSE Champion is also Co-ordinator of the Barnet Supplementary Schools Forum, supporting 30 local supplementary schools across the borough. He has worked closely with colleagues, forum members and his local LSCB to offer training and support to forum members on safeguarding issues, using Safe Network materials. He has also worked with forum members to ensure that each puts in place a nominated safeguarding lead. He now meets with those leads to take forward plans for working across organisations and delivering better training and support on safeguarding.

Outcomes

The collaborative working between Safe Network and NRCSE has contributed to a number of important outcomes:

**Increased awareness and understanding of safeguarding issues**

The training and support has helped raise awareness of safeguarding for the majority of supplementary school staff that attended. The work of the NRCSE Champions has also contributed to raised awareness:

**Improved safeguarding practice**

NRCSE reports that to date 324 schools (about 40% of their membership) have achieved minimum quality standards that include safeguarding.

> I think the framework has made them a lot more aware about what is required … when I have trained them on safeguarding issues … sometimes it is raising very simple things like when a teacher comes to a class, doing a quick check to make sure the physical environment is safe. These are small things but very important and changes that these schools then go away and make. [Barnet Champion]

**Learning**

The capacity and commitment of the Safe Network London RDM, combined with their specific remit to develop delivery partnerships, was an important success factor.

The NRCSE assessed that the training worked best where LSCB staff were involved and engaged as this added to learning but also improved awareness, communications and understanding between LSCB staff and the schools involved.

A tailored approach was needed to involve supplementary schools. Face-to-face support is key to engage groups like supplementary schools who operate outside of many mainstream support mechanisms. Online or web-based resources are not sufficient to engage groups unfamiliar with UK systems, and/or for whom English may not be a first language. In such cases resources inevitably need some tailoring:

> I have had to change the materials to work with volunteers from immigrant communities. They are good, clear but these volunteers are coming from a different level, a totally different starting point … unfamiliar with the language but also with the systems, with how things work … it needs additional input from me to make it work.
Case Study 3 – reaching small volunteer-led groups

Champions based at the Pre-School Learning Alliance in the West Midlands have been proactive supporters of Safe Network. Using Safe Network materials in their work has helped them support safeguarding practice within volunteer-led stay and play groups.

Background

The Preschool Learning Alliance (PSLA) offers information, advice and guidance to voluntary sector ‘stay and play’ groups across Birmingham. There are about 300 such groups in the city, working with thousands of children and families. They are mostly run by volunteers where parents can go with young children and stay with them during activities. They are often run in community halls or churches and in shared space.

As unregistered childcare providers, these groups are not bound by legislation and have limited access to information and training.

One of the issues PSLA encounters is that many of the groups are out in local communities and not in touch with other services, and there is often a lack of recognition of any safeguarding responsibility as they are not aware that even though parents or carers are with their children and staying responsible for their children when they are there, safeguarding issues can still arise.

When PSLA was established, the team looked at the information that was available on safeguarding and found nothing that was specific enough, or user-friendly enough, for these groups, until they came across the Safe Network materials. They had found other information, including from their local Safeguarding Board, either too complex, or simply not specific enough, covering, for instance what to do if concerned about an issue, but very little about running a safe group or safer recruitment - the kinds of things PSLA knew groups most needed.

The work

Two PSLA staff members attended Safe Network Champions’ training. Both staff rated the training highly, and appreciated the regular flow of information they have received since from their Safe Network Regional Development Manager (RDM).

The team quickly started to use Safe Network materials in their training and advice, often also signposting groups to the Network’s resources, to various templates to help them develop policies, and to the self-assessment tool.

PSLA were concerned that a lot of their groups were based in multi-use community spaces, and that this posed risks to children’s safety that groups were often unaware of. They accessed safety information from CAPT which they then used to help groups create a safe environment. This included developing a health and safety
checklist that the team now routinely use with groups to help make them aware of the potential risks and minimise them wherever possible.

**Outcomes**

PSLA report that working with Safe Network has enabled them to help groups achieve the following outcomes:

- greater awareness of safeguarding and their safeguarding responsibilities, awareness of what safeguarding means in their context, and more confidence in addressing safeguarding issues

  We’ve found the self-assessment tool useful because what we find is that sometimes when groups start using that and have a think about it, it raises questions, and they start asking questions that maybe they haven’t thought about before, so then they’re coming back to us and raising those questions

- developing and/or improving policies and procedures, and running safer services for children

  Not only has it built people’s confidence but there are at least two groups we know of where this meant that when concerns arose they were able to make referrals as a result of what they’d learnt, so we know that this is affecting families, that’s two families we know of but I’m sure it’s helping a lot more too.

**Learning**

Feedback from groups following training based on Safe Network materials has been very positive and suggests that it has had good results in part because groups are finding the information very accessible:

It’s providing information that isn’t available anywhere else in a way that small groups, like the ones we work with, can really understand and use….It’s accessible and couched in language that people will understand, which is important when you consider that a lot of the people we’re working with will never have had any formal training before, not just on this but on anything.

PSLA feels that even more progress could be made if their Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) was brought on board. Without LSCB endorsement of the Standards, they have found there is still some confusion among small voluntary groups about where to turn for advice and support. They will therefore be working with Safe Network, through their RDM, to try and achieve this endorsement.
4. Findings – outcomes for the VCS

In this section of our report we describe the difference Safe Network has made to VCS organisations. We consider the Network’s achievements against the four Safe Network intended outcomes for the VCS under the headings of:

1. safer employment
2. child safeguarding
3. child protection
4. working together.

**Key findings**

- **Safer employment practices:** Organisations supported by the Network report feeling more knowledgeable about safer employment practices, and many are able to translate this increased knowledge into making changes within their organisations, including putting in place new policies, developing new procedures, improving their recruitment processes and re-evaluating the importance of support and supervision within a safer employment framework.

- **Safeguarding and safer activities:** Organisations supported by the Network report having a wider understanding of the range of issues that fall under the safeguarding ‘umbrella’ - for instance an increased understanding of bullying issues and how to address bullying and/or increased knowledge of risk management and accident prevention. Many have made changes to the way they assess and manage risk, put in place new checklists and procedures, and have taken steps to be more proactive in reducing children’s risk of harm while in their care, whether through bullying, accidental injury or other causes.

- **Child protection:** Organisations supported by the Network report feeling more knowledgeable about child protection issues. Importantly, they also report feeling less anxious, less fearful, and more confident about child protection. Many have created, updated or improved their safeguarding and child protection policies and procedures and report having done so in a way that has engaged them in creating policies relevant for their particular circumstances and better understood and supported by staff/volunteers.

- **Working together:** Organisations supported by the Network report an increased understanding of local safeguarding arrangements, the roles of different agencies, and their own role and responsibilities within local arrangements.

- **A more up-to-date and informed VCS:** VCS organisations report that Safe Network has played a crucial part in helping them keep up-to-date and informed about safeguarding, particularly in the light of recent changes in the policy and legal context/framework for the work.

- It has provided difficult to assess which activities have most contributed to these positive outcomes, in part because most organisations appear to engage with Safe Network in a variety of ways, dipping in and out of its resources, support and training as needed. It may be that this ability to ‘dip in and out’ and access support in different ways is in itself an important contributor to the positive outcomes achieved.
4.1 Safer employment

VCS outcome 1 - Safer employment practices

Has Safe Network enabled VCS organisations to put in place and follow safer employment practices, eg, for the recruitment of staff, their induction, supervision and development?

We found evidence of both increased awareness of safer employment practices, and actual changes in working practices across a range of organisations supported by Safe Network.

Improved awareness and knowledge of safer employment practices

Survey and interview respondents reported that the Network has contributed to an increased awareness of safer employment practices in relation to both paid staff and volunteers. For instance, in our VCS survey, 68% of respondents (n=162) who had wanted support/advice on safer recruitment practices reported that they felt more knowledgeable about this issue as a result of Safe Network’s support.

*Raising the profile of safer recruitment has been so important. The focus was so much on schools before but they’ve helped us start to raise this issue in the sector now which has been crucial.*

*It has made it a lot easier for our Management Committee to realise their role and responsibilities in safeguarding and safer recruitment.*

Respondents were equally likely to have increased their knowledge or understanding from reading resources or working through the Standards, but slightly more likely to have increased their knowledge after attending an event/training. We also found that following Safe Network training organisations often exhibit a high level of commitment to making use of what have they have learnt to improve their practice.

*After today I’ll review our current processes and policies and our job descriptions. I’ll also update our Managers about disclosure and barring.*

Safer employment practices

We found evidence of organisations adopting safer employment practices in relation to recruitment, induction, support and supervision as a result of engaging with Safe Network support. 64% of our survey respondents reported that Safe Network had helped them make changes in their practice and our interviews revealed that many organisations that already employ staff and volunteers have reviewed and tightened up their procedures following support from Safe Network, while small, emergent and informal volunteer-led organisations without the required policies in place have been able to introduce appropriate employment policies and procedures for the first time.

*We have now put in place the systems we need to start employing staff with the reassurance that we are behaving appropriately and following the law. This is thanks to Safe Network.*
One of the things we’ve already changed is how we take on volunteers, asking for references and doing checks. In the past if someone’s offered to help, it’s just been “yes please” – you find that in a village where you might know someone and so feel they don’t need checking. That’s changed now. We’ve strengthened how we do things with volunteers as they can’t be ignored when it comes to safeguarding.

After doing the Standards one thing we changed was to do with how we assess interview candidates – we’ve re-evaluated to look at how we could better incorporate safeguarding within that.

4.2 Child safeguarding

VCS Outcome 2 – Keeping children safe from harm

Has Safe Network increased VCS organisations’ understanding of a wider definition of safeguarding, one that includes emotional or physical harm (eg, bullying and accident prevention)? Has it helped organisations put in place effective and proportionate arrangements for the assessment and management of risk in their activities?

We found evidence that Safe Network’s support has helped groups develop a wider appreciation of the range of issues that fall under the safeguarding umbrella, including in particular bullying and accident prevention.

Improved awareness of a wider definition of safeguarding

Not surprisingly, given the high profile of child protection and changes to employment checking processes (Disclosure and Barring), organisations within our survey reported more often seeking advice or support in these areas than with tackling bullying, preventing accidents or risk assessment. Fewer survey and interview respondents mentioned these areas of safeguarding as a priority for them. A Champion explained:

I’d say some people haven’t engaged with those other issues, like the information on anti-bullying or accidents. The wider meaning of safeguarding wasn’t understood except for child protection, but now it’s important we see there’s a wider remit than that, but I couldn’t say all groups are necessarily ready to engage with that.

Despite these issues taking a slightly lower priority with organisations, we did find evidence that Safe Network has contributed to an increased understanding among many VCS organisations that safeguarding involves the protection of children from harm and not just protection from neglect or abuse. In our VCS survey, 55% of respondents (n=145) said that they felt more knowledgeable about bullying issues, and 39% (n=151) that they felt more knowledgeable about accident/injury prevention, after receiving support from Safe Network.
These figures are not high, but we cannot assess without further exploration whether this is because those organisations already felt knowledgeable in these areas, or, because they had prioritised using Safe Network resources/support to focus on child protection and safer employment and had therefore not really studied information on bullying or accident prevention in the same way. Furthermore, these findings do not correlate well with our analysis of training outcomes from feedback forms, nor with our feedback from Champions.

Feedback from training participants showed that those who had attended training which touched on bullying or accident/injury prevention almost without exception reported an increase in knowledge in these areas – with between 90 and 98% of participants across relevant courses reporting an increase in knowledge immediately after the course. Champions also commonly reported that using Safe Network materials was helping them raise groups’ awareness of all the issues that might fall under the heading of safeguarding, and thus helping them see how good safeguarding practice includes more than simply having a child protection policy.

*Many people I meet still think child protection is all about sexual abuse and little else. Safe Network is helping challenge this idea and shift the ground.*

*It’s helping us challenge those older views of safeguarding just being about child protection. Things like, for instance, smacking, can be a challenging issue for some groups, so Safe Network is helping us get groups to think about the different things safeguarding can be about.*

Within our interviews frontline organisations confirmed that they had developed a new awareness of issues around bullying and accident prevention and their place as part of an approach to safeguarding.

*The resources have helped us update our policy and procedure on accident prevention and also we were able to set up training for new staff.*

*Looking at child protection within a wider safeguarding perspective has helped us to think of issues in a more creative way and to have more of a focus on issues of bullying for instance.*

**Improved understanding of risk management**

Feedback from frontline organisations, Champions and infrastructure staff involved in our evaluation suggests that Safe Network is helping many VCS organisations develop a greater appreciation of the importance of risk management procedures:

*I think maybe people have sometimes partly understood risk assessment but not really considered the wider issues. They have been less concerned unless something has happened, unless there’s actually been an incident. With the Network’s approach, putting it in the safeguarding framework has been a great way of getting this on the agenda and getting groups to think about it in a preventive way, not just addressing it because or after something bad has happened.*
Sometimes it’s the barrier of people just saying, “that sort of thing doesn’t happen here” … but it can … so this has helped us in recognising that we can be preventative, reduce the risks.

Improved safeguarding practice

Both interview and survey respondents reported making changes to their practice in relation to risk assessment and tackling bullying. For instance, almost half (48%) of our survey respondents reported that they had introduced improvements in their risk assessment procedures, and 45% reported that they had introduced improvements in how they address bullying as a result of Safe Network’s support. Respondents described some of the changes they have implemented:

In our project we used the CAPT information. They had a lot of good information available that we used to help us address health and safety issues, to help the groups we work with consider how to create a safe environment for children. We now have a health and safety checklist that we use with groups to help make them aware of the potential risks and minimise them wherever possible to make the space as safe as they can.

We are more aware of wider safety issues now and have improved the way we risk assess the activities of our youth group.

We had not really thought about bullying in that way before … as part of safeguarding … it has been useful to us in reviewing our policies and how we think about it in the Centre.

4.3 Child protection

VCS Outcome 3 - Protecting children from abuse or neglect

Has Safe Network increased VCS organisations’ knowledge of child protection policies and procedures, and enabled them to put in place more (and more effective) safeguards to prevent the abuse of children and young people?

We found clear evidence, through our survey and follow-up interviewing with VCS organisations, that Safe Network has contributed both to increased knowledge and awareness of child protection issues, and to the adoption of more effective safeguards to help prevent and/or identify and respond to abuse or neglect. Importantly we also found organisations are ensuring that such safeguards are well understood and followed within organisations.

Increased child protection awareness, knowledge and confidence

Of the survey respondents who had contacted Safe Network and hoped to find out more about child protection, 70% reported that the Network’s support had helped them feel more knowledgeable about child protection policies and procedures.
Many of the VCS staff/volunteers and Champions who participated in our fieldwork described how they and/or others in the sector found child protection a source of confusion, anxiety or even fear prior to coming across Safe Network’s resources and support. They identified an increase in confidence and a reduction in anxiety about child protection as important positive outcomes of the Network’s support:

_The Standards have demystified safeguarding. It isn’t just giving information but also providing clarity about the action that needs to be taken._

_We work predominantly with very small organisations. Very much the feedback from these groups was, ‘at last, something we can use’. After attending the training and when they have the resources, they feel better because they know what they’re dealing with, some of the anxiety has been removed, and they can get started with practical steps that will help them instead of just feeling overwhelmed and not knowing where to start._

_I would say it’s made us less anxious. It takes you from not knowing quite where to start to being clear and getting things moving. We are more confident now that we know what we should be doing and where to get advice if we need it._

More organisations have policies and procedures in place

Many organisations have used Safe Network resources to structure and support reviews of their policies and procedures, to create new or improved policies and procedures, and in some cases, to engage a wider range of stakeholders in this process. Some 69% of our survey respondents reported that Safe Network resources/support had helped them create, update or improve their safeguarding/child protection policies.

_Having the online templates and up-to-date advice around safeguarding has given us confidence in the procedures and policies we have put in place. They have enabled us to adopt workable policies and procedures in accessible language._

_We created a safeguarding policy from scratch – we didn’t have a policy and we used all the information from Safe Network to do that … and in doing it I realised I have a big gap in my knowledge so it then spurred me on to get more training._

We also found evidence of organisations being more aware of the importance of regularly reviewing their policies in a way that they had not previously done:

_We had some policies in place but weren’t in the habit of reviewing and updating them, so what we’ve put in place now is a system to ensure we regularly look and see any changes we need to make._

_A lot of people didn’t realise it’s a good idea to redo these every few years … the law changes … I’ve pushed for more people to go on the child protection courses because it should be like we do our first aid, an essential part of training and our working processes._
Organisations have more effective policies and procedures

Several of the Champions we spoke to, along with some of our LSCB participants, raised the point that prior to Safe Network one of their concerns had been that organisations would simply download a safeguarding policy from the internet without really understanding it or ensuring that it was right for them.

A strong theme from respondents was that Safe Network has helped organisations understand the importance of having policies in place that are appropriate to their own organisations, that are fully understood by staff and volunteers, and that staff and volunteers are supported to follow them appropriately. Champions in particular feel that Safe Network is helping groups develop policies and procedures that are better understood and more embedded in their working practices rather than a ‘box ticking’ exercise.

*The challenge is the box ticking that goes on … groups having ‘googled’ policies with no relation to local arrangements, policies that are not embedded in practice … Safe Network has helped us challenge groups to engage with safeguarding and do more than sign up to a policy they don’t understand.*

*Thanks so much … your documents and checksheet are just what is needed … I have found that many groups just copy and recycle forms from other organisations!*

### 4.4 Working together

**VCS Outcome 4 - Working together to keep children safe from harm**

Has Safe Network increased VCS organisations’ understanding of local safeguarding arrangements and the roles of different agencies within these? Do more organisations understand where they fit within these arrangements?

Work to build organisations’ understanding of where they fit within local safeguarding arrangements is not a core element of the Safe Network Standards because of the different arrangements in place at local levels. Work to raise organisations’ awareness of local safeguarding arrangements has, however, been an important element of local engagement with organisations through RDMs and Champions. For instance, when delivering local workshops, RDMs and Champions have often involved LSCB representatives and/or local officers such as Local Authority Designated Officers (LADOs). These have then shared information with VCS organisations on issues such as what the different roles of agencies are within local arrangements, or how to make a referral if concerned about a child.
Organisations are more knowledgeable about theirs and others’ roles

Some 56% of our survey respondents reported that they felt more knowledgeable about theirs and others’ roles within safeguarding as a result of Safe Network’s support. Training participants’ feedback and interviews with VCS organisations also reflected this increase in knowledge and awareness, and we found a higher rating of increased knowledge among training participants, particularly where LSCB and key local staff had been involved:

*I have a better understanding of the Safeguarding Board and improved confidence now about contacting the appropriate agencies and making professional judgements with added confidence.*

*When we ran the courses … we made a point that we wanted members of the LSCB to attend as well so that we were offering an introduction between those two groups, between the supplementary schools and the Safeguarding Board leads, … it was very interesting, we had lots of responses along the lines of “I had no idea we had an LSCB”, “I had no idea that the police had anything to do with child protection”, and also we raised awareness of what Social Services do because there is an idea that’s commonplace in these communities about social services just being about taking their children away.*

*One of the key areas that Safe Network have looked at here is … the responsibilities of organisations if they have concerns about their own staff. We have managed to get some engagement in terms of the LADO process and what groups with concerns should do … and there is some evidence that some groups are now more aware – they are using that process.*

4.5 Case studies – VCS organisations

We share below four ‘stories from the frontline’ where managers and staff from VCS organisations explain in their own words what difference Safe Network has made for them.

These case studies are all focused on small and medium-sized organisations, and demonstrate how small groups find the Network’s resources particularly accessible and appropriate for their needs. They illustrate the way in which many organisations, once introduced to the Network, will often return to its resources a number of times as and when the need arises. They also shed light on why it is difficult to say definitively which elements of the programme most contribute to positive outcomes – because groups clearly engage with the resources and the support available in a number of different ways, making it difficult to look at the impact of any one intervention entirely separately.
Case Study 4 – Safe Network helping small organisations

Four small organisations from around the country tell their stories of how Safe Network has made a difference to their awareness, their confidence and skills, and the framework within which they deliver services for children and young people.

Example 1: Staying up to date with best practice

We’re a voluntary organisation providing services for children and young people aged 0-19, and as well as that we provide support to families. We run crèche activities, out-of-school services, afterschool clubs, day-time activities for children during school holidays and a play club. We also have a senior youth club. We’d identified safeguarding as an issue we wanted to look more closely at.

I attended Safe Network training and found it really useful. It allowed us to network with other organisations doing similar work and realise that we’re all facing the same issues and dilemmas, and the other thing that was really helpful is that it helped us to think more about the changes to the CRB system – they were able to give the most up-to-date position on it and that was very helpful.

Since the training we’ve ordered some of the Safe Network booklets and we’re making sure each of the sections within the organisation has access to the information. The thing we’ve used the most though is the policies – for a voluntary organisation like ourselves it’s a bit of a godsend really that you can access so much information. For a relatively small organisation that doesn’t have the support of a national organisation to be able to access the information, or the staff time or people to produce the policies, it’s absolutely brilliant.

Example 2: Engaging staff and young people on safeguarding issues

We used the resources to engage staff, volunteers, and also, importantly, the children we work with, to encourage their participation in safeguarding. … From our meetings and activities with the children we were able to make some real changes in how they understand bullying and what they can do about it. Together we designed an anti-bullying slogan the children could identify with and a series of posters, set up a friendship stop where the children can offer or be offered peer support, and set up a safe box – where the children can fill in and post forms we developed from ideas in one of the Safe Network resources, so they can raise issues they want to talk about.

I also did the EduCare training and then did some training on safer recruitment for the staff. Generally I’ve found the online approach more accessible for us as we have part-time staff, or we find perhaps they can’t attend training because transport is an issue. I’ve also used the Standards and found them useful to offer some reassurance about what you’re doing, you can see how you’re doing or where the gaps are. I think the Safe Network resources have helped us regularly review what we’re doing, because otherwise you can be a bit complacent, but actually things are developing all
the time and other people can have ideas of things you might not have thought of, so it’s invaluable for that. The way the Safe Network stuff is presented, it’s just the best thing out there …and there’s the fact that you can call and get some extra information if you need to. I’m so grateful it’s there. It’s a really good resource

**Example 3: Getting ready to work safely with young people**

We’re a Colliery Brass Band, an entirely voluntary organisation. For the band to survive we’ve identified that we need to attract more young people, so we’re setting up a youth section for 8 -16 year olds.

We went to a training session and they recommended we register on the Safe Network site. We just wanted a general overview of safeguarding and to make sure that when we have an official launch for our youth section we have all the policies in place we need, and that we’re working to the best practice standards where possible. Then we’ll be able to say to parents that we’ve got this in place, we’ve got resources in place, these people have undertaken this training, these people have got current CRB disclosures, etc. This way we can reassure parents, and they can be as happy as possible that the people dealing with their children are the right people.

Following the training session we’ve started to look at some of the resources on the website. Our welfare officer is going through the checklist and seeing what we’ve got in place … and we’re in the process of rewriting our Constitution based on some of these things we’ve found. In terms of getting ready to work more with the younger age group, the process of going through the Standards is definitely helping us.

**Example 4: Keeping knowledge, skills and policies up-to-date**

I manage an out-of-school club and we offer activities before and after school and activities in the school holidays for children aged between 4 and 14. We have ten staff and work with about 250 children. I found out about the Safe Network online when I was doing some general research, looking for information on child protection and I’ve since used some of their documents and policies. I get the monthly e-bulletin and I’ve used that to help keep staff up to date with developments. We’ve started using the Standards self-assessment process. I’ve found it useful as they’re comprehensive and up-to-date, written in language that people can understand, without jargon, which really helps. Some of the information has covered things we already knew, but it’s prompted me to make some changes, to add a few things to our policies, like making a few changes to our bullying policy and our policy on volunteers. I know what I want to include when I’m reviewing policies, but it has made it easier to find and use things on the website, it’s helped me get the wording just right of what I want to include.

It’s also been useful for my deputy because safeguarding training is really important, but with what’s available locally she would have had to wait quite a while to attend a course so she could update her safeguarding training. In this case it was very helpful to have the website and the online training available so that she could really get to grips with it and improve her knowledge and do that in her own time, not having to wait months for training to become available.
5. Findings – improving safeguarding support for the VCS

In this section we outline achievements against the intended outcomes for the safeguarding ‘infrastructure’, that is, the organisations and partnerships that influence, resource and support the VCS:

1. local VCS infrastructure organisations
2. Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs)
3. local commissioners
4. national and specialist infrastructure organisations, policy-makers and funders.

Key findings

- Safe Network’s support for the VCS infrastructure (second-tier VCS organisations) has led to a number of outcomes for individuals involved in supporting frontline VCS organisations, and for their wider organisations. The benefits of engaging with Safe Network (either as a Champion or simply as a supporter of its activities), have included:
  - increased knowledge and skills in promoting good safeguarding practice;
  - the ability to offer more and better support on safeguarding issues;
  - a raised profile and credibility of the VCS with local statutory agencies, as an important partner in local work to safeguard children and young people.

- Those LSCBs that Safe Network has most closely engaged with at the local level report a range of positive outcomes. These include:
  - an ability to provide greater clarity for the VCS about safeguarding and about local expectations of good practice standards;
  - an increased capacity to support good safeguarding practice within the VCS;
  - an improved level and/or quality of engagement with local VCS organisations.

- Commissioners who have been engaged with by the different Safe Network partners also report a number of positive outcomes. These include:
  - more consistent and reliable information about safeguarding standards within commissioned VCS organisations where the Safe Network Standards have been adopted as the requirement for commissioning;
  - a better understanding of childhood accident prevention and its relevance across a number of commissioning agendas, and, in some areas where intensive support has been given, a more joined-up response to accident prevention work;
  - a more robust evidence-base to inform strategic planning and commissioning in relation to childhood accident prevention.

- National and specialist infrastructure organisations who have worked with Safe Network are positive about the partnerships they have created, and report that working with Safe Network has increased their capacity to deliver safeguarding support.
5.1 Outcomes for local VCS infrastructure

Infrastructure outcome 1 – increased VCS infrastructure capacity

Has Safe Network increased the capacity of the local VCS infrastructure to support good practice in VCS safeguarding? Has it contributed to an increase in the amount and quality of safeguarding support available for VCS organisations at the local level?

Of the 85 organisations who have signed up as (actual or pending) Champions, the majority (80) are local or regional VCS infrastructure organisations. We found clear evidence that Safe Network has increased the capacity of these organisations to better promote good safeguarding practice in the VCS. Our survey and interviews with Champions indicate that engaging with Safe Network has contributed to one or more of the following outcomes for them and for their organisations:

- increased knowledge and skills in promoting good practice
- ability to offer more and better support
- helped to raise the profile of the VCS and build its credibility with local statutory partners.

We also found that Safe Network has achieved similar outcomes for many other local infrastructure organisations who are not registered as champions but are still using Safe Network resources, promoting their materials or providing training based on the Standards or other Safe Network resources.

Increased knowledge and skills within the VCS infrastructure

A majority (75%) of the Champions engaged in our evaluation (n=34) reported that Safe Network had increased their confidence and/or their skills in promoting good safeguarding practice. Through our VCS survey and interviews our evaluation involved a further 42 infrastructure organisations who have engaged with Safe Network, sometimes very actively even though not in a Champions role. This sample were just as likely to report increases in knowledge and confidence, though slightly less likely to report increases in skills as a result of Safe Network support.

We have developed extra expertise in safeguarding which has improved our confidence and ability to support our members.

Being a champion has increased the offer we can give to our groups. We can better support our groups with safeguarding issues and I’m more confident in giving information around this.

I feel more in touch with the latest information and a bit more on top of the subject now. It just makes you feel a bit more confident that you’re in touch, better informed, you know more …

For Champions this outcome was commonly attributed to a combination of information and resources, training, and/or support from their RDM. For other infrastructure organisations increases in knowledge and confidence were more likely to be attributed to feeling supported by high quality, reliable resources.
I have learnt more through using the materials and it's given me new insights and ideas, but the other thing is knowing that what I'm doing now is validated if you like, is supported by the weight of these national experts, it means I have more faith that I'm giving the right advice and in the right way.

**Ability to offer more and better support**

Champions commonly reported that as a result of Safe Network's support they and their organisation were able to offer more and/or better safeguarding support. Those who had previously been producing their own local resources were particularly pleased to have access to the Safe Network suite of resources, reporting that this had saved them considerable time and effort they might otherwise have spent on developing/updating their own resources.

They save us time by preventing us having to invent things from scratch ... they are incredibly important in supporting our organisation's work around safeguarding.

Safe Network has really enhanced the support I can offer to VCS groups – giving me extra resources, networking opportunities and support.

Having a bank of resources ... has reduced time I would have spent on designing bespoke resources so that I can increase the guidance and support I offer to more organisations.

Safe Network resources allow me to provide authoritative advice to groups that are working with young people.

It's made things so much easier for us in terms of having the right information to give the groups, but also by giving us clarity.

Our evidence from other (non-Champion) infrastructure organisations suggests similar outcomes. Just like Champions, the majority of infrastructure staff we spoke to described how using Safe Network's resources had either made it easier for them to reach and support more groups and/or had enhanced the support they were offering them.

Excellent resources, so supportive to help VCS groups understand what they need to do to keep children and young people safe. Templates easy to complete as required for individual requirements. So glad I can access easily and hand out to groups I am supporting.

We have used the resources to support small organisations and groups to develop policies and processes – (we) forwarded samples and supported groups to make adjustments. We have raised awareness with groups around the resources and the Network and used the training and resources to brief them regarding the Disclosure and Barring Service.
Increased ability to champion and/or represent the VCS

Several Champions and staff from infrastructure organisations were clear that Safe Network had helped them feel more confident in their dealings with statutory partners and/or improved their working relationship with statutory partners. In some cases they felt it had helped them raise the profile of the VCS’ contribution to safeguarding and helped improve statutory partners’ understanding of (and respect for) the VCS’ role and needs. In a few cases it had enabled organisations to improve VCS representation (or the quality of that representation) at LSCB level – for example, through participation in subgroups or additional support for VCS Board representatives.

*We are more confident about safeguarding … (and) make more of a contribution to Safeguarding meetings.*

*I’m the VCS representative on the LSCB … becoming a Safe Network representative strengthens the position for the sector … because as the Safe Network rep it’s like a local VCS provider offering the local voice but with the support of the Safe Network provision behind you.*

### 5.2 Outcomes for Local Safeguarding Children Boards

**Infrastructure outcome 2 – LSCB recognition and support for the VCS**

Has Safe Network contributed to improved recognition and support at LSCB level for the VCS’ safeguarding role? Has Safe Network support increased LSCBs’ capacity to support and/or engage with VCS organisations? How have LSCBs benefited through their engagement with Safe Network?

Over the past two years Safe Network has regularly shared information and news with all 152 LSCBs across England, and has engaged with 96 LSCBs on safeguarding issues either through development work undertaken by RDMs or Champions, or events involving Safe Network staff. The Network’s engagement with LSCBs has focused largely on promotion of the Standards, but has also included promoting better working relationships and understanding between LSCBs and their local VCS.

The Network has encouraged LSCBs to endorse the Standards as a tool to help VCS organisations assess and improve their safeguarding practice. This has often involved RDMs presenting information on the Standards to a Board meeting and facilitating follow-up discussions about how they could help local work on safeguarding and VCS engagement. To date 25 LSCBs have formally acknowledged or endorsed the Safe Network standards.

We interviewed LSCB Business Managers and Training Leads from ten Local Authority areas. Feedback from these LSCB staff has been highly positive about the Network’s activities and in particular about the support received from RDMs. Through our desk research into work done alongside these local testimonies we found that in those areas where it is most active the Network is making a significant contribution to raising the profile of safeguarding locally; to improved cross-sector working on
safeguarding issues; and to increasing the capacity of LSCBs to engage with their local VCS. We were able to identify the following outcomes as the most common:

- LSCBs are able to provide greater clarity for the VCS about safeguarding in their context, and about safeguarding expectations
- LSCBs have increased capacity to support good safeguarding practice within the VCS
- LSCBs have better engagement with VCS organisations.

Greater clarity about safeguarding and expectations

In areas where the Safe Network Standards are being promoted or endorsed LSCB representatives reported that Safe Network has helped them be clearer with groups about what is expected of them.

In terms of benefits for organisations, I couldn’t speak for all the voluntary organisations in the area of course, but those that are linked in to statutory partners now have a clear message from us of what we expect in terms of safeguarding standards .... It has helped us give real clarity to the voluntary sector about what’s expected ... what’s required of them.

We have been able to give a much clearer message about what we hope to see as regards their practice, the policies and procedures they need to have in place. The Safe Network materials get that across far more clearly than anything else I have seen and it has definitely helped our communication with the sector.

Increased capacity of LSCBs to support VCS

LSCBs reported that working with Safe Network (either through RDMs and/or local Champions) has helped them achieve more than they would otherwise have done, or to achieve their goals more quickly than they would have otherwise have done. They were able to identify a number of ways in which Safe Network had increased their capacity to support the VCS:

An additional resource to help meet groups’ information and support needs

Many LSCBs report a lack of capacity to meet the needs of all the VCS organisations in their area, and have worried about a lack of support being offered to (or taken up by) small organisations. Those who have engaged with Safe Network report a clear benefit in being able to signpost and refer groups to the Network for support and/or to local Champions for support. The Network has helped LSCBs better meet groups’ support needs by giving them access to an additional resource in the shape of information on the Safe Network website, downloadable resources, the Standards – toolkit and self-assessment, and training.

We did some work with Safe Network at the time when we were developing our Section 11 audit, and we were very pleased to see that they had developed their Standards … We’re endorsing them ... to help community and voluntary organisations to do their own sort of audit to help them judge if their standards are up to scratch and plan what to do if they’re not. We feel it’s a good template for them to use
and we’re happy for them to use it. Also … our Training Officer has … looked at their training and we were happy with what they were offering, and that it met the right standard.

We have found the Standards helped set a minimum standard including for organisations that previously had nothing … tells them what that standard is but also practically helps them meet it.

Groups would often come to me and ask me what do I do, where do I go to find out about that, or they’ll send a policy for me to have a look at but the truth is that I just don’t have the time to look at them all so what is really good for me now is that I can say, ‘there’s a really good resource – here’s the link – so have look at this first and then if you need help you can contact one of these Champions, or you can come back to me’.

The Standards are great. We’ve endorsed them and supported champions training in our area, and our training manager is in discussion with the Safe Network Regional Manager about working together not just to help the organisations be ready for commissioning.

It’s all about organisational readiness – having the right policies and procedures in place, but also to look at developing some training for voluntary organisations.

More awareness of new ideas and perspectives on best practice

Where LSCBs have worked closely with RDMs they report benefits in terms of their knowledge about what works in engaging with the VCS. Several LSCB Managers mentioned the benefit of Safe Network bringing with them new perspectives, information on the evidence-base for work, and learning from other areas’ experience.

Our relationship with Safe Network has been really positive and productive. I’d say that it has also added a welcome critical edge for what we’re doing. They’ve given us feedback and listened to ours, they’ve brought ideas to the table and things for us to think about, and their more direct involvement, in the training, at events … has been very helpful to us.

Greater reach and engagement with VCS organisations

LSCBs who have engaged with the Network commonly report improved reach and engagement with their local VCS. This has often been a result of the fact that Safe Network has sought to work as far as possible in a partnership with both the LSCB and the local VCS whether on events and training or on longer-term development projects, champions initiatives or pilot schemes in local areas.

Their support has helped us improve our engagement with the voluntary sector, in particular those smaller groups that we have found it difficult to engage in the past. There’s still more to do but we’ve been able to achieve more working with Safe Network than if we had been doing it on our own, and more in a shorter-time than it would have taken us without them. We’ve had some very successful events and
the follow-up has been great in terms of more groups expressing an interest in our training.

Though hard to measure, some local Champions believe that this increased engagement has in turn contributed to a shift in attitudes locally towards the VCS and its level of professionalism in its safeguarding role.

I think it’s also had an impact on how the statutory sector view the voluntary sector locally, in that they can see that we’re taking things seriously and we know that we have a responsibility for safeguarding too. We’re not just sitting back and expecting other professionals to “do” safeguarding.

5.3 Outcomes for local commissioners

Infrastructure outcome 3 - Safeguarding within local commissioning

Has Safe Network improved local commissioners’ understanding of the importance of safeguarding, and of the VCS’ safeguarding role? Has it enabled commissioners to prioritise and plan work that is effective in keeping children safe from harm?

Two strands of work within the Safe Network programme have sought to achieve outcomes for commissioners. These have been:

1. The work of Children England and the RDMs’– making the case for working with the VCS at the local level, and supporting better commissioning through use of the Safe Network Standards.

2. CAPT’s Making the Link project – making the case for better commissioning of programmes that keep children safe from harm (that is, more evidence-based and more integrated commissioning of safeguarding and accident prevention programmes).

Better commissioning – using the Safe Network Standards

The RDMs have worked closely with local commissioners through their work with LSCBs. The work has sometimes involved detailed work from RDMs with LSCBs to review how Section 11 assessments are used locally, and to explore the potential of the Standards as an alternative or complementary assessment framework. As a result of this work, 11 LSCBs have now made the Standards the required standard of safeguarding good practice within their local commissioning arrangements for the VCS. Over and above this 25 others have endorsed or recommended them to groups seeking statutory support or funding, though without going as far as making them the required standard.

Those LSCBs we spoke to who were exploring or had established a link between the Standards and commissioning reported that endorsing the Standards was giving them greater reassurance than had previously been the case about VCS
safeguarding practice. They reported that adopting the Standards had given them a way to obtain consistent and comprehensive information about the safeguarding practice of potential VCS service providers and was helping them assess and make decisions based on information they can trust.

From an LSCB perspective, we’re there to hold agencies to account and that can be a difficult task sometimes, so having the standards in place gives us some assurances that there are good standards that are evidence-based. So, when we did our Section 11 audit we expected to see evidence and we could see the evidence. Also it wasn’t just a tokenistic ‘yes we’ve got a policy’ and ‘yes, staff have been trained’. It’s actually enabled organisations to really engage and then evidence what they’re doing. It has given us as a Board some assurances that the organisations are not just saying yes they’ve got a policy, but really recognising why their staff need to be aware and need to be trained. We now know that they’re asking themselves some important questions because that’s part of the process of going through the Standards … which provides some reassurance … (and) some consistency.

Better Commissioning - Making the Link
CAPT’s Making the Link project has sought to promote the role of the VCS within commissioning alongside the work of other partners in the Network, but has also had other important aims. It has focused heavily on enabling commissioners to prioritise and plan effective, evidence based and integrated programmes of work to keep children safe from harm. This aim lies behind its in-depth mentoring in Bradford, Hull, Newcastle and Wandsworth and much of its learning and development programme of training, master classes and learning resources. The project’s activities are primarily aimed at commissioners and strategic accident prevention leads, though also open to senior practitioners within both the statutory and voluntary sector.

Feedback from mentees (Local Authority strategic leads on childhood unintentional injury prevention) as well as from attendees at courses and workshops, training and those using resources suggests a number of outcomes being achieved for accident prevention within local strategic planning and commissioning:

- Raised profile of the issue
- A broader understanding of the issue and more joined-up responses
- A more robust evidence base on which to base planning and commissioning.

*Raising the profile of childhood accident prevention as a commissioning priority*

Mentees reported that, as a result of their work with CAPT, childhood accident prevention now has a greater priority among strategic leads and commissioners in their area, and within local planning.

*They have helped us be clear that we’re focusing on the right issues and helped us be clear on what information we need and from who … They have helped us raise the profile of the work and bring people*
together where this might otherwise have taken us a lot longer to instigate

Because they’re independent … not involved in the local politics … they can say things I can’t and … what they’ve said has helped get people to listen more and take it on board.

**A broader understanding and a more joined-up response**

CAPT’s work has helped bring about a broader understanding of childhood accident prevention and the range of different agencies and individuals who can play a part in keeping children safe from harm. This in turn is helping enable a more joined-up response in local areas that brings together all those who can contribute to work more effectively together. This outcome most clearly emerged from the mentoring programme, but individuals attending masterclasses and other events also reported an element of this.

The two (master classes) I’ve been to there was a huge range of people there … all doing different parts of the work, but it helped you see how we could all be drawn in together with that shared goal. It opened my eyes more to the number of people that need to be involved at a local level that I’d never even thought of, different professionals.

CAPT are helping us plan an event to get more buy in from senior people in different departments, so that whatever department they’re in, they can see that they have a role in childhood accident prevention. They could each deliver something that seems small, but could impact more widely on children’s health and in turn could have wider impact.

**A more robust evidence-base to inform planning/commissioning**

Mentees reported that CAPT’s support had helped make their planning more evidence-based – based on a better knowledge of what works best, what makes the most difference in terms of keeping children safe from harm. This outcome was achieved through a combination of signposting to data and research, advice on how to make best use of existing local data, helping mentees focus on what data they should be collecting. Once again we found evidence from feedback from workshops and events and website visits that others besides mentees are also benefiting in this way and finding CAPT’s signposting to data useful in their work.

The workshop gave solid evidence to support the safety information I deliver around the toddler groups in the area. It helped ensure the safety element of our work has a high profile when setting the requirements of our commissioning.

We were doing a needs assessment … we sent it to CAPT and they came with some great comments and advice and suggestions … and point out where we could get some more information … it was very practical and it definitely helped us improve the assessment. Then they’ve also fed in information and highlighted a couple of other Local Authorities that are a bit ahead of us with things and I’ve found that very helpful so I was able to look at their websites and their plans and strategies and get ideas from that that could also help us locally.
5.4 Work with national partners and influencers

Infrastructure outcome 4 - national and sub-sector partnerships

Has Safe Network effectively engaged national and subsector organisations in work to promote best practice in safeguarding across the VCS? Has it positively engaged with and influenced those who make decisions about support for the sector?

Building infrastructure partners’ capacity to deliver advice and support

A part of the Network’s strategy for influencing the quality of safeguarding practice across the sector was to engage national and specialist infrastructure organisations in its work to promote best practice in safeguarding, for instance encouraging membership and umbrella organisations to endorse the Standards to their members or developing joint work with national organisations on themes or areas of interest.

The Network has worked with more than 20 national and specialist infrastructure organisations. We interviewed partners from seven of these for our evaluation. These partners (some of whom are Champions) reported on the value of the work done and the effectiveness of joint work, and helped us identify the outcomes of the work.

We found that partnership working at a national and subsector level has not only enhanced Safe Network’s ability to reach and engage with more of its priority groups, but has also boosted partners’ capacity to give better advice and support:

When I got involved one issue was helping our members keep up with the ever-changing legislation and guidance… We had also identified a number of areas where we felt there was a lack of confidence on child protection and safeguarding issues, or where groups actually didn’t know some of the basics of the legislation so they were unintentionally not following best practice. By working with Safe Network we’ve been able to provide access to resources and additional support that we weren’t able to do previously.

The groups are now more aware of what safeguarding is, and what their responsibilities are. … We’ve found the partnership has worked really well for us and for our members, who now understand safeguarding as part of the whole package of quality assurance.

We now always refer people on to Safe Network, for instance, if they contact us about training, we mention the support available from Safe Network and that’s particularly useful … our training doesn’t happen that frequently so it’s good for us to be able to signpost them … so they’re not kept waiting without the information they need.

Engaging with and influencing decision-makers

As well as engaging with national and specialist organisations as delivery partners, Safe Network also hoped to influence national funders and decision-makers and
policy-makers in national government. The intended outcomes of relationship-building at a national and more strategic level were that:

- Safe Network would be aware of opportunities to develop the programme further in response to changes in policy or other external changes.
- The Network would also be aware of, and involved, in decisions that affect safeguarding within the VCS.
- Support for Safe Network would come from the highest levels (including through national funders, who it was hoped would become supporters and ‘adopters’ of the Standards) so that its impact could be enhanced.

Our evaluation found that though pleased with some achievements, overall the Network partners assessed they had not achieved all they hoped to from this strategic work. This was for a number of reasons, including a need to reprioritise and invest less time in this work and more on other more pressing priorities (eg, the need to refocus activities on the revised Working Together guidance); and a lack of capacity on the part of Safe Network, but also on the part of some its national and strategic partners which affected planned activities. For instance, the latter affected the Network’s plans to develop stronger links with strategic partners through membership of its Advisory Group. This was only partly achieved as the role of the group became less clearcut when the programme was well-established but also because attendance dwindled as partners had other pressing priorities:

“There have been times when … I would say it has been hard to maintain the commitment to the group, not to the issues of course, but time pressures have made it difficult for people to attend or get involved.

I think this was one of the more challenging of our aims in the business plan. It has been hard to engage in some of the areas that we wanted … in hindsight perhaps we weren’t clear enough with people about why we wanted them involved … and in the end a lot of more energy went into in-depth pieces of work at the local level than originally planned …

Despite these challenges, however, we found the following achievements in relation to Safe Network’s strategic work with national partners:

- Safe Network was in contact with the Charity Commission when they were working on their safeguarding children strategy. The Network commented on the draft strategy, helped promote it when it was launched in April 2012, and was subsequently added to a list of reliable sources of information for VCS organisations on the Charity Commission website.
- Good contact with colleagues in the ISA and DBS enabled the Network to involve both agencies in Twitter surgeries and in events aimed at keeping the sector informed and up to date.
- A positive link was established with Ofsted – with a representative invited to join the Safe Network Advisory Group. Safe Network has maintained contact with them between meetings as needed to discuss issues including the development of the programme and its resources.
• Though work to influence funders has progressed more slowly than planned, one large funder, Big Lottery Fund, has agreed to signpost grant applicants to Safe Network for guidance and resources.

• Although the Network has not had the success it hoped in encouraging national organisations to become ‘adopters’ of the Standards, many have become ‘supporters’ of the Network and its Standards, as evidenced by the fact that 18 national organisations signed up to be delivery partners in the Network’s proposal to the DfE for continued funding from April 2013.

5.5 Case studies – improving safeguarding support

We share below four case studies about Safe Network’s work with infrastructure providers, commissioners and national partners that highlight how the Network has made a difference to the delivery of safeguarding support. They illustrate how the programme has added to the capacity of those who support the VCS on safeguarding issues, and added value to what they can offer – ultimately enabling them to offer more and better support to more organisations.
Case Study 5 – working ‘top down’ and ‘bottom up’ in a local area

In Warwickshire, Safe Network has worked closely with both the LSCB and local infrastructure organisations to increase local capacity to offer safeguarding support, particularly to small organisations and faith groups.

Background

Warwickshire Children’s Voluntary Youth Services (WCVYS) is a local infrastructure organisation for children and young people’s VCS organisations. Safeguarding has always been a part of their work, but by 2011, it became clear that many local groups, particularly faith groups and independent local groups (those not affiliated with any larger or national body), were struggling to keep up to date with the changing safeguarding landscape.

At the same time Warwickshire Safeguarding Children’s Board (WSCB) also felt it needed additional help to adequately support local VCS organisations. Despite having a positive working relationship with the local sector, through WCVYS, the Board was keen to do more to reach out to small organisations but felt it lacked the capacity to do all that it wanted to.

The work

The work in Warwickshire has involved the Safe Network West Midlands Regional Development Manager working with both WSCB and WCVYS - to enhance the Board’s offer to the voluntary sector; to work in partnership to engage and support small organisations and faith groups; and to develop a local Champions programme.

Enhancing WSCB’s offer

Safe Network’s RDM shared information about the Network and its Safeguarding Standards with WSCB and discussed links to local work on a Section 11 framework. Following these discussions, the Board endorsed the Standards, posting a link to Safe Network on the WSCB website, and signposting organisations to Safe Network’s website and resources within its own training.

Partnership work to engage with small organisations and faith groups

Safe Network joined the Safeguarding Board’s Faiths Subgroup - set up to address lack of engagement of local faith groups – and then worked closely with other members, including WCVYS and the Churches Child Protection Advisory Service, to take forward the work. A jointly organised faith and safeguarding event in May 2012 reached almost 50 individuals from the faith sector and received very positive feedback from participants.

Champions programme

Between 2011 and 2012 fifteen Safe Network Champions were trained in Warwickshire, including the Director of WCVYS, Vic Jones. Since becoming a Champion, Vic has:

- Worked closely with the RDM to promote partnership working on safeguarding and to roll out the Safe Network Standards
• Delivered training using some of Safe Network’s materials
• Worked with the LSCB to improve VCS representation at Board level
• Shared Safe Network information with local groups, and signposted organisations to Safe Network via a link on the WCVYS website
• Co-delivered events with Safe Network and other partners, and planned local events on safeguarding issues such as disclosure and barring.

Outcomes
Safe Network’s involvement has enabled both WCVYS and WSCB to enhance their safeguarding ‘offer’ to the VCS. WSCB reports:

Their involvement has helped us with capacity … (for instance) … finding the Safe Network training has been great for us so that we’re able to say that groups who can’t access our training could access their training….it’s increased their choice so if people have a preference for the Safe Network training because they feel it’s right for them, that’s fine for us.

Both partners reported that Safe Network’s support has helped improve levels of engagement of faith groups on safeguarding issues.

They’ve helped us reach out to, and put safeguarding on the agenda with, the smaller and faith groups in the community and voluntary sector. … having Safe Network involved has helped us open up more possibilities, open things up to a much wider group, and to communicate safeguarding messages to a wider group including smaller groups and faith groups.

Safeguarding has become more of an integral part of WCVYS’ work and is now incorporated into their business plan. Being involved with Safe Network has increased WCVYS’ confidence in safeguarding and has enabled them to take a more proactive role on safeguarding whereas before they ‘saw Safeguarding as mainly the Safeguarding Board’s business.’ WCVYS has also recruited a dedicated safeguarding volunteer to support local Safe Network Champions.

Learning
We have identified two key enablers of success in this work:

• **Timeliness:** Both partners said the Safe Network offer and Standards came along at ‘the right time’, as they had both already identified what was needed locally.
• **The nature of Safe Network’s approach:** Both partners felt that the accessible nature of the resources aided their ability to engage with VCS organisations, along with the way that the RDM has worked, ‘co-delivering’ and working in partnership at the local level, being quick to offer support, and offering an invaluable external viewpoint on the work needed locally.

Though much has been achieved, there have been challenges and these have largely been linked to capacity, with changes in staffing and cuts in local infrastructure both affecting timescales and achievements at different points during the work.
Case Study 6 – cross-sector champions

In Hampshire, partnership working between voluntary and statutory sector partners has led to the early beginnings of a multi-agency network of Safe Network Champions with a remit to support good safeguarding practice across the VCS.

Background

The Hampshire Alliance is a county-wide infrastructure organisation that provides support exclusively to voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations working with children and young people. The Alliance has been supporting its members on safeguarding issues for some time. However, its Development Manager, Ian Milsom, felt that the development of the Safe Network Standards represented a great opportunity to further promote good practice within the sector, particularly for small organisations, and in 2011 Ian became a Safe Network Champion.

The work

After signing up as a Champion, Ian began to raise awareness of the Safe Network Standards, signposting groups to the Safe Network website, sharing information from its newsletters and organising a local event with the support of the Safe Network RDM to promote the Standards and other resources. However, as sole member of staff at the Alliance, Ian was aware that there were limits to what he could achieve. To better meet local need, and to ensure his work complemented the work of the LSCB, early in 2012 he attended a meeting of Hampshire Safeguarding Children’s Board to introduce the Standards and seek LSCB support for work to engage other local staff as Champions.

The Board was supportive of Ian’s recommendation to use the Standards locally to support local VCS organisations. A small working group was set up and began planning an event to train up a cross-sector ‘network’ of Champions. As well as staff within other local VCS infrastructure organisations, the Council agreed it would be good to have its own Community Development Facilitators involved, as their role involved them coming into contact with small groups working with children and young people. In October 2012, 24 local development workers from both the VCS and statutory sector attended a Safe Network training event which introduced Safe Network resources and gave an overview of local safeguarding procedures.

Outcomes achieved

Though it is early days to assess the impact of this work, there has been an increase in local capacity to promote good practice, with positive feedback from those who attended the session and evidence of signposting now taking place across both sectors.

We’ve adopted a real partnership approach to cascading the information out there. It’s recognising that we all can take some part in actively promoting good practice on the ground and of course it means we have the advantage that we can reach more groups and
that we’ve got a more joined-up approach and some clear shared messages on safeguarding.

The hope is that the multi-agency approach will ensure that the VCS is clearer on expectations as messages about safeguarding are consistent across different sources.

Our hope is that it will be clearer for groups what is expected of them as we roll out the Standards with support across both sectors.

The Alliance is confident that over time the ‘safe organisations’ approach of Safe Network - encouraging groups to really engage with safeguarding issues rather than simply download a standard policy - will improve groups’ ability to really embed good safeguarding practice.

This was the difference we saw straight away with the Standards. It was an interactive approach, they could take a safe organisations approach, and work through it themselves … it was the thing that really struck us about the value of the Standards.

The future

Within the LSCB working group a representative of the Commissioning Team for Children’s Services has begun to look at the possibility of using the Standards as the requirement for grants, commissioning and contracts – that is, requiring groups to either have the Standards in place, or to be working towards them. This work is still being scoped locally but if more formal endorsement does take place in the future, it is hoped this too will act as a driver to push more widespread take-up of the Standards and the spread of good practice.

Learning

The commitment and enthusiasm of the Alliance for Safe Network and for the Champion’s role has been important. Without their early recognition of the potential of the Standards to drive improvements in practice, and their proactive approach to increasing local support for Safe Network, local progress would have been slow. The two-pronged approach – support from the LSCB and a local VCS infrastructure organisation in tandem – has helped drive the process and give it momentum.

Some local infrastructure staff were initially uncertain about the value of Safe Network as they have used other resources in their work. However, making it clear that Safe Network could be regarded as simply one more tool to help them in their work helped gain acceptance and ‘buy in’. This was only further enhanced when staff then saw the materials and resources and began to use them in their work.

I have my own safeguarding materials that I’ve developed over the years, but I found the session very useful and the Standards nicely written and clear. … I now recommend Safe Network at our training including at our ‘Meet the LADO’ sessions and in our training with Trustees.
Case Study 7 – integrated approaches to keeping children safe

In Bradford CAPT has helped the city’s Accident Prevention Co-ordinator and her colleagues refresh the local Childhood Accidental Injury Prevention Strategy using a more robust evidence base, and has also helped develop a checklist and tools for early intervention work with vulnerable families.

Background

Bradford is one of four areas around the country selected for mentoring support through CAPT’s Making the Link project. Davina Hartley, the Accident Prevention Co-ordinator for Bradford Safeguarding Children Board (BSCB) was keen to have CAPT’s support to help her and her colleagues achieve a number of goals:

A strategy refresh: With their first three-year Childhood Accidental Injury Prevention Strategy (2009-12) coming to an end, BSCB was keen to develop a new strategy and action plan that would take account of the significantly changed environment in policy and resource terms, and that would have a clear action plan with a strong evidence base. CAPT’s help was sought to help identify what would make most impact - boosting limited local data with evidence from other areas.

Joined-up approaches to accident prevention: Davina wanted support to be clear with partners in different agencies, including health, that they would focus on what matters most. She also wanted specific help developing a checklist and tools to help assess risk and identify vulnerable families. A checklist used under a previous home safety scheme in the District had been fairly successful but had not been used consistently and not by all organisations that could be using it so Davina’s idea was that the checklist should be revised, then data fed into an ‘early warning system’ database which BSCB could use to identify vulnerable families so that appropriate support could be put in place.

Work done

Once the mentoring arrangement was agreed, work progressed quite quickly in both areas.

• To help with the strategy refresh and bring local partners together the Making the Link team facilitated a half-day workshop providing a national perspective and examples from other parts of the country to assist in the development of the strategy. This achieved cross-department attendance and was very well-received.

• CAPT staff attended local meetings of the BSCB subgroup working on the safety checklist, bringing information and ideas and then going away and drafting options for the checklist based on their knowledge and experience of similar work taking place elsewhere around the country.

• Between meetings CAPT provided one-to-one phone and email support to Davina, and, when she was temporarily seconded elsewhere for a few months, CAPT liaised closely with her line manager and with public health.
A revised strategy action plan was completed and launched at a BSCB safeguarding conference in October 2012 - at which CAPT gave the keynote address on ‘Poverty, Safeguarding and Accidents’. The revised home safety checklist and guidance on its use, which CAPT helped develop, has now been piloted and well-received. Already several local partners have agreed to use it following its launch in April 2013.

Outcomes

Davina reports that CAPT’s support has helped BSCB achieve the following outcomes:

- A stronger evidence-base to give focus and clarity to the Strategy Action Plan thanks to CAPT’s support around local data collection issues and sharing data from research and other sources.

- A more effective checklist to support early intervention work with vulnerable families. Though the checklist was a priority and would have been developed anyway, the difference is that it is ‘more rigorous and more clearly evidence-based as a result of CAPT’s input’.

- Accident prevention was a local priority but competes with many others at a strategic level. CAPT’s workshop enabled a cross-section of strategic leads to really focus on the issue, to consider how it fits across so many workstreams and how people can work together on it. ‘CAPT brought that view on how it fits across different areas … the workshop really helped raise the profile of injury prevention locally at a more strategic level.’

Davina also feels her own learning and development has been supported. She has learnt more about what others are doing around the country, feels better networked with others, and has learnt considerably from her mentor.

I have really enjoyed working with (him) … you always learn new things … (he is) so knowledgeable about so many things you can’t fail to go away knowing more.

Learning

The BSCB Business Manager identifies a key success factor for this work as CAPT’s positive reputation and profile in Bradford as they had previously worked in the area and were known to public health as a provider of good quality training and advice. He felt this gave the work a higher profile and more credibility from an early stage.

At some points in the project, particularly with Davina’s absence and with some uncertainty and change as regards local structures and staffing, the work moved forward more slowly than anticipated. This has meant that CAPT will not be able to support the rollout of the checklist as planned as it will be launched after the official end of the project. However, despite this much was achieved, and this is in part attributed to the fact that there was already a strong basis of joint working to help move the work forward – for instance, the local Child Poverty Strategy had already prioritised work on family support and accidents so this added an extra driver to push forward the joint work on the checklist even without Davina’s input for a time.
Case Study 8 – working with national partners

Partnership working between CCPAS and Safe Network builds on the strengths of each partner to raise awareness of the important role churches and faith groups play in keeping children safe from harm; and to improve their access to clear, consistent safeguarding advice.

Background

The Churches Child Protection Advisory Service (CCPAS) is an independent Christian charity. It supports churches and other faith groups on safeguarding issues, and works closely with government and other stakeholders to influence policy and practice in relation to faith and safeguarding. As CCPAS’ Chief Executive, Simon Bass, explains, the role of churches and faith groups in delivering and/or hosting activities for children and young people is often underestimated.

‘Outside of schools, churches are the largest providers of youth work … in fact there are more church youth workers in paid employment than there are local authority youth workers, and that situation is only set to increase with reductions in statutory funding for youth work. Many don’t realise that so many churches are open seven days a week and could be offering activities for children two or three times a week, and on top of this there are other faith sectors to consider … and all the faith groups involved in running supplementary schools … places of worship opening up for community use …. Our organisation alone provides more than 35,000 disclosure checks a year.’

CCPAS has its own set of ten safeguarding Standards supported by model policies and forms and available online or on DVD to its members.

The work

Following a number of initial discussions about ways of working together to achieve common goals, Safe Network and CCPAS agreed to work together to:

- Actively promote each other’s work and resources and signpost organisations appropriately to each other’s services
- Co-deliver events on faith and safeguarding at local and national levels
- Develop guidance on safeguarding standards so as to provide clear, consistent messages across to churches and faith groups across both organisations.

Promoting each others’ work: Information about the partnership between CCPAS and Safe Network was shared via Safe Network’s e-bulletin and on the Safe Network website, with a link to the CCPAS site. In addition, Safe Network wrote an article that appeared in the December 2012 issue of the CCPAS ‘Caring’ magazine detailing Safe Network activities and giving details of the partnership between the two organisations.

Working together: Throughout 2012 CCPAS and Safe Network worked closely
together to deliver workshops and events on faith and safeguarding for several LSCBs in the Midlands and CCPAS have also been invited to speak at a number of national Safe Network events to share information about faith and safeguarding, and about their work.

**Joint work on Standards guidance:** With both partners aware that there could be some confusion amongst faith groups with two sets of Safeguarding Standards available, it was agreed that some guidance about the two different sets would be helpful. Although there is a lot of common ground between the Standards, the CCPAS Standards contain important sections that address issues that are unique and specific to faith groups. In order to help groups make decisions about where to look for guidance the Standards have been compared and mapped out against each other, and the partners have drafted a guidance leaflet to make it clearer how the respective Standards work, how groups can use them, and to help groups choose what works best for them in seeking to improve their practice. With the guidance leaflet nearly completed at March 2013, it will shortly be distributed and promoted across both organisations.

**Outcomes**

Both partners acknowledge that the partnership has been fruitful, and there are some good early outcomes as regards raised awareness and access to information:

- More than 16,000 churches and faith groups (CCPAS members) have received information about Safe Network and its resources
- Around 50 staff and volunteers from faith groups have attended safeguarding events co-delivered by CCPAS and Safe Network, and following the events reported increased awareness of safeguarding issues and where to find support, with a significant proportion planning improvements in their practice as a direct result of their learning.

The standards guidance has yet to be distributed, but it is hoped that this will reduce any confusion for faith groups about where to get support on safeguarding issues.

**Learning**

A number of things have contributed to the success of this work, not least mutual respect: both partners acknowledge the specific expertise and skills the other brings to the work. CCPAS had already worked with Children England and with NSPCC, so this new work built on those positive connections. For CCPAS however, the bringing together of the partners under the Safe Network banner has enabled a new working relationship:

> Safe Network as a partnership is about … encouraging people to engage with safeguarding issues, rather than issuing policy statements or adopting particular positions in the way an individual organisation might. This fits better with how we work and has made it easier for us to engage with Safe Network … because we engage in a dialogue with our members and we’re aware that for churches and faith groups there are challenges and grey areas where we can’t be prescriptive but need to encourage dialogue.
6. Learning

As Safe Network plans ahead for its future beyond March 2013 we were keen that our evaluation should identify and share learning from the experience of delivering the programme. In this section of our report we therefore consider what has been learnt about what works by identifying the factors that have contributed to positive outcomes, and the challenges and factors that have hindered positive outcomes.

**Success factors**

The quality and relevance of the Safe Network ‘offer’ (what is delivered)

1. Depth of understanding of its target market
2. The practical and accessible nature of its resources and training

The variety of delivery mechanisms (how it is delivered)

3. The breadth of the offer and variety of ways organisations can access support
4. Developing packages of local support tailored to local circumstances

The value of partnership working (who is delivering)

5. The skills, expertise and reputation of the three programme partners
6. Working effectively with others

**Challenges and barriers**

Change, resistance and capacity

7. Change and uncertainty in the external and policy environment
8. Reduced VCS capacity to engage at all levels
9. Resistance to Safe Network as an ‘outside’ or ‘rival’ provider
10. Internal capacity
6.1 Success factors

Safe Network has achieved considerable success across most areas of the programme. It has achieved or exceeded the majority of its targets. It has reached many of those it intended to and made a real difference to those it has reached - improving safeguarding knowledge, skills and practice within thousands of VCS organisations. It has also, importantly, helped increase capacity within local infrastructure to deliver more and better safeguarding support to the VCS, and it has supported better commissioning.

Through our evaluation activities we have been able to identify the factors that have most significantly contributed to the Network’s success. These relate to:

- what has been delivered (strengths of the Safe Network ‘offer’);
- how the programme has been delivered (strengths of the chosen delivery mechanisms); and
- who has been delivering the programme (strengths of the partners involved and partnership working).

The quality and relevance of the Safe Network ‘offer’ (what is delivered)

Success factor 1: Depth of understanding of its target markets

An important factor in the engagement of VCS organisations with the Network’s activities has been the relevance and appropriateness of the services and resources offered. Voluntary and statutory partners alike have appreciated the fact that the Standards and other safeguarding resources are VCS-specific, tailored to the sector’s needs, and clearly based on knowledge of and consultation with the sector. The knowledge and expertise of the partners, plus an ongoing commitment to listening to the sector and consulting on its activities and resources, have both helped ensure this depth of understanding.

The materials are distinctive … the support through the LSCB is fairly broad, not very specific, so the advantage of Safe Network is that its specifically linked and targeted for the voluntary and community sector … particularly for smaller and medium-sized organisations.

It was great when Safe Network came along because it was aimed at and understood the voluntary sector and that’s quite rare even if something is branded for the voluntary sector, you often find it isn’t really appropriate. This was different and very practical.

Success factor 2: The accessible and practical nature of the support

VCS organisations and other stakeholders have been impressed by the way in which Safe Network’s materials, the Standards, other resources and training have been designed so as to encourage and support groups to actively engage with safeguarding in a non-threatening and practical way. The provision of practical tools,
templates and guidance alongside informational resources has enabled many groups to more easily make the move from feeling more informed to taking action to improve their safeguarding practice. Our analysis of training feedback strongly suggests that the use of real-world scenarios, group work and participative techniques in training have contributed to improved learning, and an increased likelihood of that learning being applied in VCS settings once the training is over. The fact that most of the resources and training options are free is also an important aspect of accessibility that has contributed to high levels of take-up.

Their approach encourages you to really think this through. It’s not just about downloading a policy, anyone can do that, it’s building understanding and taking people along with you so that the policy makes a difference.

It is just the best thing out there. The difference with Safe Network is that it isn’t just words on paper, when you just get something on paper it doesn’t always sink in. Their stuff helps you really engage with safeguarding. It’s something about the way it’s presented, it’s practical and realistic … I’m so grateful it’s there.

The variety of delivery mechanisms (how support is delivered)

Success factor 3: The breadth and variety of the offer

A key factor in explaining why so many groups have been able to engage with the programme is that there is such a wide range of ways to get involved. VCS organisations have appreciated that the programme offers information across a broad spectrum of issues, and that there are different ways they can get involved. The range of approaches and resources has allowed for engagement by different audiences, with different knowledge levels, learning styles and preferences. It is also relevant that the programme has focused on both ‘top down’ and ‘bottom up’ activities to achieve maximum impact. That is, activities that promote and support change from the top (with LSCBs, commissioners, national umbrella organisations) at the same as engaging with VCS organisations at a grassroots level.

They’ve recognised that we all learn differently and lots of us are short on time or simply can’t afford expensive training courses, so you can read, discuss, use on your own or in a group setting, do the online training, refresh your knowledge – whatever suits you.

What I like about them is that they have a ‘dip in and out’ quality to them so that you can actually just use them as and when you need to and how you want to. There’s a real flexibility to the way you can use them and the way you can advise others to use them.

They’ve got the ability to influence things at the senior level but the staff that can get you engaged in the local area. I think that’s important, to have the both.
For me where it’s worked is that it’s about education not just resources, so you have the people there to support it, and infrastructure organisations are ideally placed to deliver on it, but then you have the LSCB there to do the endorsing because that cascades it out better.

Success factor 4: Tailored local support

Safe Network has been able to enhance its offer with local support tailored to local circumstances, particularly through RDMs and Champions. This has significantly contributed to the Network’s success. The RDMs have enabled ‘buy in’ in local areas in part because of the quality and relevance of the Safe Network offer but also in part because they have worked in a way that respects and involves local stakeholders and have not adopted a ‘one size fits all’ approach to their work in local areas. A majority of the local partners we engaged with in our evaluation remarked positively on this, talking about the value of having someone working with them to develop local solutions, and about genuine partnership and ‘co-delivery’. In many areas Champions have also been an important part of ensuring support considers local needs and circumstances and engages local stakeholders, and they too have brought contacts, expertise and ideas that have enhanced the success of the programme in local areas and/or with particular targeted communities.

When you’re working in a rural area like this, the context is different, and with all due respect to colleagues in London, it’s incredibly valuable having someone on the ground who not only knows the set up here, but the issues and our challenges, our local context.

The great thing about having the Regional Manager around is that after the training you can ring her with questions and I would and have done so. She’s really helped us in our work and been very supportive.

What seems absolutely key to me is that they have worked through local infrastructure, they have not come in and tried to impose something on us, but had a dialogue with us, considered what would work best for us.

The value of partnership working (who is delivering)

Success factor 5: The skills, expertise and reputation of the partners

One of the key reasons that the Network has been successful is that the three partners are highly regarded as experts in their field. All stakeholder groups identified this as a factor in explaining the success of the Network in terms of credibility within the sector, a level of trust in the quality and content of the materials and support offered, and a high level of engagement with the programme at local levels. This has also contributed to the willingness of national and umbrella organisations to engage with and support the programme.
A big driver for getting involved was knowing about CAPT and their expertise. We know they’re the experts in the field.

Children England have worked with us in the past, so we know that we can trust them to deliver.

Everyone knows the NSPCC are the experts in this. I’d say seeing their name on the materials gives people a lot of faith that they are getting the best possible advice.

This matters for the groups as well because they can see it’s coming from a reliable source, somewhere they can trust.

We look for excellence and quality in who we work with. Our reputation … can only be enhanced working closely with a partner like Safe Network …

Success factor 6: Partnership working

An important factor in the success of the Network has been the range and effectiveness of its various partnership arrangements. The core partnership of the three national partners did not come together naturally (it was driven by a strong steer in this direction from the programme’s main funder, the DfE). Although the three organisations have different organisational cultures and ways of working, they have demonstrated a clear shared commitment to achieving the overall goals of the programme and this has enabled the partnership to become a high-functioning delivery partnership, generally assessed by its external partners as ‘punching above its weight’ – achieving much with the resources at its disposal.

Our evaluation found examples of effective joint working, and a positive rating across the partnership of the way decisions were made about the programme, and of the NSPCC’s role in managing the programme - ensuring that all three partners kept in touch and worked jointly where this would be appropriate and would add value.

Joint delivery: We found evidence of effective joint work on different areas of the programme where partners have complemented each others’ work and enhanced what has been offered. For instance, close work between the Children England Partnerships and Outreach Manager and NSPCC’s Safe Network Safeguarding Manager; between Children England’s RDMs and CAPT’s Making the Link team; and between CAPT’s communications lead and the NSPCC Central Team on resources and website information.

A lot of it has been where we might start the work or set up an event and then they would come along and input too, or also we have worked together on some of the local developments and of course on resources. There has also been signposting so where I would find someone and signpost them on. We’ve probably each played to our strengths in that regard.
There has been good interaction between the outreach work, the Central Team and the resources the Central Team develop … we’ve worked hard to make sure resources are developed in conjunction with RDMs where possible and with information fed up from the ground.

**Effective management and decision-making:** Partners recognised the value of NSPCC as the lead partner in brokering joint work, ensuring communications between partners - particularly when Network meetings were less frequent owing to other pressures - staying in close contact, and involving partners in decisions about the programme.

*Part of the reason we have been successful is that we have had intensive discussions with each other about what this programme ought to look like.*

*He [Network Manager] has been important in terms of making sure that we are all aware of each others’ work and bringing us together where that needs to happen.*

*The NSPCC have been supportive … Sometimes there have been moments when we have come to a decision that has felt like theirs … but then they are the lead organisation … and I’d say 95% of the time we have been able to make decisions on a pretty consensual basis.*

**Synergy – achieving more together than singly:** Working as a partnership has enabled Safe Network to reach more of its target beneficiaries and improved the quality and credibility of its resources and its services. Feedback from the core partners and some external partners also suggests that the Safe Network image has enabled ‘buy in’ and support from organisations who might not have been so happy to engage with just one of the three core partners on their own. Both Children England and NSPCC mentioned that perceptions of their individual organisation or what it represents in local areas, could sometimes act as a barrier to gaining local engagement, but felt that this has been overcome by having the Safe Network identity. This is a factor several of the network’s external partners also mentioned.

*It hasn’t simply been about access to different audiences, and it has been about more than three organisations delivering. It’s hard to put your finger on it, but there has been more we’ve achieved, we have learnt from each other, we’ve been able to try different ways of working for the benefit of the project.*

*Neither Children England nor NSPCC could run Safe Network on their own anywhere near as effectively as we can together … and if we had not had CAPT’s input then we would have lost that expertise and the confidence people have who are aware of their work in that field.*

*I think for some the image of the NSPCC had been about reporting concerns, a bit like social services. That can put up a barrier, can cause a bit of fear … but Safe Network has been different. It offers an encouragement to talk about concerns, to engage with safeguarding differently, in a way that perhaps feels safer. I think that’s an important part of why this whole approach is working so well.*
This element of synergy has also derived from the Network’s wider partnerships. Our evaluation found that the Network has developed useful, mutually beneficial partnerships that have significantly contributed to its success, contributing to greater effectiveness, reach and impact and helping them achieve more for more organisations. All the external partners we spoke to were positive about their working relationship with Safe Network and able to point to mutual benefits.

\[ I \text{ have found them very easy to work with and I think we’ve been able to achieve a lot together.} \]

\[ \text{It has very much helped us in our work and we have helped them reach out to more organisations through our membership. It has been a fruitful working relationship and we hope to continue working with them in the future.} \]

### 6.2 Challenges

Our evaluation has identified a small number of areas where Safe Network has not delivered all it hoped to, where delivery targets have not been met, or, where it has delivered as planned but only with some difficulty. We outline here some of the main challenges and pressures the Network has faced that have affected aspects of its delivery and/or its achievements.

**Challenge 1: Change and uncertainty**

The changes in the external context for its work have inevitably challenged Safe Network – challenged it to keep pace with change, identify opportunities and risks, respond and adapt, and at the same time to keep the sector informed. However, there have been prolonged periods of uncertainty, for instance about the nature and/or timescales for changes, and delays in announcing or implementing policy changes. Local authority and NHS cuts and restructuring and the emergence of new commissioning bodies was a further layer of change to contend with.

Safe Network partners all report feeling that though much has been achieved, more could have been had there not been such a high degree of change and uncertainty, exacerbated by public sector spending cuts that significantly affected both statutory and VCS providers.

\[ \text{Some of our plans and our hopes, for instance about commissioning and the voluntary sector, about Health and Wellbeing Boards … that just got very complicated and some things didn’t completely turn out as planned simply because of the timeframes …} \]

\[ \text{We have achieved good outcomes but there is a caveat. We might have done more but when we started we had no real sense of the turmoil that would affect the statutory sector, the VCS cuts … so we have made progress, significant progress, but it has been in a time when a lot of our local partners have been dealing with turmoil. There is the issue of how new structures will all fit together … even now that} \]
isn’t clear … and then there is the question of ownership of the issues … it has been very challenging.

The shifting timescales and delays in announcing key policy changes caused problems for the Network in very tangible ways, such as affecting plans for events and publications, making it difficult to plan some aspects of the work in advance and/or forcing postponement of events and delays to publication dates.

We have been trying to do some showcase activities across the country, sharing information … keeping people informed … desperately trying to transmit information about ‘Working Together’ into the sector … but we had to re-organise those events maybe four or five times and that absorbed a lot of effort.

Delays in releasing the information … have made it really challenging for us to be able to plan our work … some of the events in the past few months, but also updating the Standards and developing resources.

Cuts and restructurings also had an impact when they forced changes in personnel, sometimes bringing to an end fruitful working relationships, removing Champions and supporters from positions of influence, or causing a project or planned work to come to a halt. This ‘churn’ in the system affected the Network’s work at all levels from its local grassroots work with voluntary organisations, to work with LSCBs and strategic leads within local authorities or public health, right up to Ministerial level.

One of the barriers to moving things forward more quickly is that this has been such a massive period of change, there have been cuts in jobs, there’s been a lack of consistency in staffing. We just lost a key person in the county so we’re having to start again. You have to make sure that the relationships you build are not just with one person. There’s been a need for us to work at both strategic and grassroots levels and build the relationships to support the work.

**Challenge 2: VCS capacity to engage at all levels**

**Local infrastructure organisations’ capacity:** The cuts in resources for the VCS in the past two years have contributed to some of the worst times the sector has seen. One of the first parts of the sector to be affected was local infrastructure. Local Infrastructure Organisations (LIOs) have seen significant reductions in staffing and resources and in many parts of the country have been forced to substantially reduce their staffing, merge with other organisations, or close down. This has meant there are fewer infrastructure staff to engage with programmes like Safe Network, and many of those left in post are under more pressure in their roles than in the past as they often try to fill gaps left by colleagues departing or services closing, and just generally find themselves trying to ‘do more with less’.

A really big issue is one of infrastructure, so a lot of the Champions in this area come from second-tier organisations and see this as part of their role but they’re now increasingly under-funded and struggling and we’re seeing a reduction in children and young people’s networks.
Champions’ capacity: RDMs have reported concerns that Champions are struggling to stay engaged, attendance at meetings has dropped, and they are losing good Champions as a result of cuts or changes in job roles. Several of the Champions we spoke to reported they were feeling under pressure in their role as they had seen their organisations affected by cuts or other changes. When asked about the challenges facing them in their Champion’s role a third mentioned cuts in their own organisation and 78% mentioned pressure of other commitments and lack of time. A number explained the effect of cuts on their work - affecting their capacity and potentially also the quality of what they are able to offer:

The main challenges for me are time and reducing resources. There is pressure from trustees and others to limit time given to groups, … I fear the gentle, relationship-building approach that is often needed around safeguarding and small groups will be jettisoned in a mistaken push for ‘business-like’ service delivery, which will mean less quality services, more expensive services and less well-supported groups.

I’ve never yet been to a Champions meeting where I came away thinking, “oh god I didn’t learn anything”, I personally think they’re a good use of my time, but we’re finding numbers are dropping now because we have too many demands on our time.

Frontline VCS organisations’ capacity: Champions in fact identified cuts in frontline organisations as more of a challenge for Safe Network than cuts in their own infrastructure organisations, with almost half (47%) of the Champions in our sample mentioning cuts in other organisations as one of their main challenges and several who have been Champions for some time worrying that it is becoming more difficult to engage groups in follow-up activities once they have been signposted to Safe Network.

We can’t get groups to come to training… Everybody is short staffed and time is difficult to find at the moment.

Everyone’s trying to do more with less in the sector right now. We’re multi-tasking more than ever. It’s a really difficult time to be asking groups to give their time and they struggle with it even if they do see this as a priority.

Partner organisations’ capacity: The final area in which cuts have proved a challenge to the Network has been in achieving its partnership targets. Though it has achieved positive outcomes through much of its partnership work, reductions in capacity and cuts within organisations has meant that some of its partnership projects have taken longer to progress than originally anticipated. This issue has affected work with local partners, with the Making the Link mentees, and with some national partners on shared approaches to safeguarding standards which have seen delays as other pressures within partner organisations have had an impact.

These difficult times have made it very challenging for the Advisory Group … we haven’t been able to get a consistent number of people attending and I understand it’s really because we are all just so busy.
We’re all in the same boat, we’re all concerned with sustainability now and some of the organisations we’ve worked with things haven’t come to fruition simply because they’ve had to stop and focus on their own challenges, … financial issues … more pressing priorities … survival!

Challenge 3: Resistance to Safe Network as an ‘outside’ or ‘rival’ provider

Our evaluation has focused chiefly on outcomes in those areas and/or organisations where Safe Network has been able to engage and deliver support. We do not therefore have much data on those areas where it has not engaged – for instance, to understand whether any lack of engagement has simply been a capacity issue, or whether there has been local resistance or other barriers.

It was beyond the scope of our evaluation to look in detail at the areas where the Network has struggled to get a foothold, or at organisations that have been reluctant to engage or support its work, but certainly we found some anecdotal evidence that negative views towards, or scepticism about the Network’s offer was a challenge at least in a small number of areas and/or within some national organisations.

There were some instances of LSCBs, Local Authorities and national membership/umbrella organisations not willing to support Safe Network in their area/for their members either because they felt the Standards/training/resources were not necessary as they had their own in place, and/or because they were sceptical of the value of Safe Network compared to some other existing materials or framework in use. A small number also felt that the lack of external checking, assessment or validation of the Standards made it a less credible framework than it otherwise might be.

The issue that’s hindered our progress is that our LSCB have not signed up to it. They have their own way of doing things. It’s their own way and never the same as anyone else’s because they’re so big and they are really quite protective about having things done their own way.

There’s a reluctance to admit the LSCB could do things better and also a strong feeling that local is best … why would we need anything else?

What we felt was missing was that there’s no accreditation, it’s not clear what it all means to organisations that have worked through the Standards. They’ve gone on a course but what’s the follow-up, what’s changed? You hope they’ll implement it, but how is that followed up to see if it’s actually happening? It’s like a quality assurance aspect of it that’s missing … I think if they thought about the quality assurance aspect they’d get more buy in.
Challenge 4: Internal capacity

The Network’s delivery targets were ambitious and the changing safeguarding policy landscape added to the pressure of its workload. Demand for the information, support and resources it has offered has been high, and higher than anticipated, and interest in in-depth work in localities has also exceeded expectations. These factors have combined to put considerable pressure on the partners. RDMs in particular have faced very ambitious targets to work across whole regions with only a day a week funded through Safe Network. All three partners mentioned pressure of work and capacity as a challenge for the Network, but also assessed that this had been a challenge that they had risen to, with all staff, and particularly RDMs, working flexibly to meet targets.

The RDM model is very effective, but what makes it challenging is the limited time they have through Safe Network. We’ve benefited because I know Children England have been flexible about that but expectations have been very high. If we had had time, we could have done more profiling of the work done and celebrating it. … it has been very hard to keep track of everything that’s been going on.

I think we’ve worked well together but everyone is so incredibly busy, it means we’ve not been as in touch with each other as we might have been.

There are a couple of things where we haven’t done as much as anticipated but there was no slack in the system, if someone is ill or moves on, we carry on as best we can but those sorts of issues inevitably affect progress …

She (RDM) has been incredibly flexible and I don’t know how she gets so much done in just a day or so a week because I know she has lots of other areas to support but even in spite of that she’s been and come to our events … I feel it’s been over and above really.

6.3 Case studies – overcoming challenges

We share below three case studies that focus on some of the different ways in which Safe Network has sought to respond to and overcome some of its challenges. Each case study reflects on a pilot project developed to address an identified challenge:

- **Encouraging local engagement with a national programme**
  - creating a localised resource in South Gloucestershire to increase the appeal and take-up of the Standards among local groups.

- **The issue of credibility and accreditation**

- **Capacity issues – pressures of work and time**
  - Safe Network using new media to engage stakeholders who are busy and short on time.
Case study 9 – creating localised resources

In South Gloucestershire, joint work between two local partners and Safe Network has resulted in the development of an online resource that ‘customises’ the Safe Network Standards to appeal to local groups, aiming to increase take-up and adoption of the Standards among the local voluntary and community sector.

Background

In South Gloucestershire both the Local Authority and local voluntary and community sector (VCS) infrastructure organisations were aware of the need for accessible safeguarding support for the sector, and in particular for smaller organisations.

The Local Authority Safeguarding Children Strategy Manager, who is also the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), reports that she lacked capacity to fully support the VCS, but wanted to be confident that the local VCS met safeguarding standards. At the same time the CEO of South Gloucestershire CVS also wanted to better meet the safeguarding needs of local groups.

Timely contact from the South West Safe Network RDM led to three-way discussions about how best to build more consistency in safeguarding practice across the sector, including through take-up of the Safe Network Standards and through promoting better awareness of and engagement with local Safe Network Champions.

The work

In May 2012, Safe Network presented their standards to the South Gloucestershire LSCB, who agreed to endorse and promote the standards as recommended good practice. It was felt that some local tailoring would increase ownership, take up and consistency and demonstrate multi-agency support.

Over the next few months local stakeholders were involved in the project, including Safe Network’s RDM and Champions, the LSCB, VCS organisations and the local Care Forum. A South Gloucestershire version of the standards was developed, with a foreword from the LSCB and the CVS, and an additional chapter with local information.

The standards were launched at a multiagency event in November 2012, attended by 25 VCS organisations, Safe Network Champions and local authority staff (including the Director of Children’s Services and the Chair of the LSCB). The standards have been promoted by, and made directly available from, partners’ websites, and promoted via a number of local and national newsletters.
Outcomes

Although the resource was only launched at the end of November 2012, local partners report early outcomes for local VCS organisations:

- The LADO has ‘a really good resource’ to signpost groups to – both the Standards and the champions - saving time for her and the groups she supports.
- Those who attended the launch event reported feeling better informed about the Standards, the role of their local Champions, and the LSCB.
- An analysis of Safe Network’s website data for the period since the bespoke resource was made available online shows that:
  - there have been 159 views of the page since it went live
  - registrations with Safe Network from local organisations have trebled.

With all partners consistently promoting the Standards, they anticipate less confusion among groups about what is expected of them. The likelihood of this has increased as other parts of the Local Authority have also begun to promote the Standards. For instance, one of the Council’s departments has included in their latest grant application process a requirement for a safeguarding policy or statement, and all would-be applicants (175) have been signposted to the Safe Network Standards to help them ensure that they can meet this requirement.

The future

The local partners are keen to keep up the momentum and build on their success. The next step will be to continue the promotion of the bespoke resource across the County, perhaps by recruiting more Safe Network Champions. A series of workshops is also planned to raise awareness of the Standards.

Learning

Local partners identified number of factors contributing to the success of this project:

- There were clear gains both for the VCS but also for their own organisations in their work to support the VCS.
- The quality and accessibility of the Safe Network Standards, and their being seen as ‘by and for’ the voluntary sector.
- This project needed the involvement of stakeholders with the authority to make decisions, but these people often lacked time to drive the project. The support of the Safe Network RDM was key in keeping the project on track and undertaking some of the ‘hands on’ work.
- The RDM worked with the local context rather than ‘imposing’ a national model:

  It’s often difficult for local organisations when large national organisations hoover up those kinds of contracts but don’t talk to local organisations. This was different. Very much the best thing about their approach was that they recognised where we fit within the local infrastructure picture which was refreshing.
Case Study 10 – piloting local accreditation of Standards

In the London Borough of Bexley, close links between the local CVS and the Bexley Safeguarding Children Board have enabled the CVS to pilot a new approach to using the Safe Network Standards.

Background

Early in 2011, Bexley Voluntary Service Council (BVSC) decided to get involved with Safe Network. BVSC was already actively involved in local work on safeguarding, including as a member of the Bexley Safeguarding Children Board’s Quality and Effectiveness Subgroup, but felt the Standards might meet an identified local need for a framework for assuring good practice for VCS organisations that was more accessible than the Section 11 template.

We had tried using the Section 11 template but it wasn’t working well, particularly for smaller organisations, it just didn’t seem fit for purpose, it didn’t allow for the variety of the sector. We knew we needed something else and that’s when Safe Network came along with the Standards.

BVSC shared information with the LSCB about the Standards and the Champions programme and LSCB partners were keen that Bexley should get involved. The Board supported BVSC becoming a local Champion. BVSC then mapped the Standards against the Council’s criteria and found the match so close that via the quality subgroup a recommendation was made to the LSCB Executive that the Standards be introduced as the new measure of effective practice for the VCS. The Executive endorsed the Standards and local work then really got underway.

The work

Following training from Safe Network, BVSC offered events and support to organisations to work through the Standards. The London RDM was actively involved at this early stage, supporting the process and speaking and facilitating at events.

After a few months of BVSC offering tailored support to groups so that they could assess themselves against the Standards, it was decided locally that an independent assessment of how well groups were meeting the Standards would be helpful. This was partly in response to a feeling amongst participating groups that independent assessment would provide better evidence of their achievements than the self-assessment process. Following discussions between BVSC and the LSCB, the Safer Bexley Mark was born. It was launched at an event in September 2011.

Following an organisation’s self-assessment, BVSC now acts as a moderator and assesses their practice. The process is robust and involves looking at policies and procedures and other documentation, including case studies and examples of policy implementation. When BVSC think the Standards have been reached, a recommendation goes to the Board’s quality subgroup, who can then ask questions or seek further evidence. If BVSC’s assessment is agreed, the LSCB award the Safer Bexley Mark in recognition of the quality of their safeguarding practice.
The level of support required from BVSC by VCS organisations varies; some VCS organisations applying for the kitemark are already Ofsted registered, while others are starting from scratch. From the outset BVSC have been clear that it’s important that organisations should not just download standard templates, but that they follow the spirit of the Standards, and adapt ideas to their own particular circumstances.

Outcomes

To date, six have groups achieved the Safer Bexley Mark, with ten more well on the way. BVSC have identified a number of important outcomes as a result of their engagement with Safe Network and the development of the kitemark. These include:

- increased VCS engagement with, and understanding of, safeguarding issues
- increased skills and confidence in dealing with safeguarding within the sector
- better, more up-to-date safeguarding policies and procedures being adopted.

BVSC has found that using the Standards has helped them raise awareness of safeguarding and what constitutes good practice. Feedback from groups points to increased confidence in dealing with safeguarding issues and in dealing with other professionals, with groups reporting being either more reassured and confident about their existing practice, and/or able to reflect on and learn about things they could do better. As one local group recently awarded the kitemark reports:

"I found the assessment very useful … some of the things we already did but could simply record better, but also it highlighted some things that we could improve upon … We’re in the process of updating and changing some of our policies so there were things we have definitely taken on board and used."

Learning

A number of factors have contributed to the success of this project. Having a close, positive working relationship between BVSC and the LSCB was vital in establishing the kitemark and giving it credibility. Each partner played to its strengths, for instance, BVSC offers 1-2-1 support but not training - recognising the value of the existing LSCB safeguarding training. ‘We felt that the training is better done through the LSCB’s training programme. It’s very comprehensive and it’s better for the groups to do in a multi-agency setting - it can add to their learning.’

The Safe Network RDM helped generate interest in the project, and the local BVSC Champion reports how helpful it has also been knowing that there is someone on the end of the phone to help with any queries that might arise.

BVSC feels strongly that the quality of the materials and their user-friendliness really help groups engage with safeguarding: ‘Though working through the Standards takes time, the local Champion feels it offers a valuable learning opportunity that brings wider benefits in terms of ensuring safer practice within organisations.

"It’s really about being sure that the work isn’t just on the surface, that the whole process is underpinning and informing how they’re working with children. The process of the Standards really helps with that."
Case Study 11 – making it easier using new media

As the Network has recognised the extent to which pressure on time and resources has reduced its stakeholders’ capacity to engage as actively in meetings and events, it has explored new media as a way to offer more accessible, flexible ways for people to engage.

Background

A key challenge that has arisen for the Network, most acutely during the past twelve months, has been the increasing pressure on time and lack of capacity across all its stakeholder groups. Cuts in the available resources for both statutory and VCS partners have affected people’s ability to engage in activities and meetings, and this has been reflected in relative decreases in attendance at events and a number of Champions’ support events being cancelled owing to low bookings. Feedback from potential delegates identified pressure of work and/or problems travelling if events are not held in people’s local area as the main reasons for not being able to attend.

Following discussions about how to address this issue within national Safe Network team meetings a number of ideas emerged for how to make it easier for people to engage using media and social media, including: using social media and Twitter; developing online, video-based resources to support information-sharing and training; and trialling online (virtual) formats for meetings and workshops/seminars. The development of webinars (online seminars) was also seen as an opportunity to explore sustainability options – with a plan to trial ‘paid for’ attendance at these to assess their viability as an income-generating activity.

Work done

Social media and Twitter: In order to increase levels of engagement and interactivity with the programme, in 2011 both Safe Network and Making the Link websites joined Twitter. Numbers of followers have increased month on month, and it has proved a useful way to keep people informed and aware of the Network’s activities or the latest news. For instance, by March 2013 the Network had nearly 1,500 followers with numbers increasing at an average of 60 new followers a month. Then in October and November 2012 the Network piloted using Twitter for two ‘surgeries’ with input from Safe Network central team staff and guests from the new DBS and the ISA. Though participation levels were not as high as hoped, it was a promising start to this new approach to engaging with VCS organisations.

Online, video-based resources: In late 2012 the Network developed a series of short videos/films that have been made available online. These have included seven videos that explain the Network’s staffing, website and resources as well as a video that gives information about feeling safe and what safeguarding means from the perspective of children and young people. These have proved popular with visitors to the site with 2,101 video viewings on the website, and a further 1,320 viewings via a youtube link since the launch of the videos in January 2013.

Virtual meetings and learning events: The Network is exploring using ‘go to’ for virtual meetings, and has already piloted ‘webinars’, web-based seminars transmitted
over the internet. One of the key benefits of webinars is their interactivity - participants are able to give, receive and discuss information as the content (a powerpoint slide show) can be paused to allow discussion and question and answer slots. Safe Network hopes that webinars could be used to support Champions and other Network supporters to stay up to date and interact not just with Safe Network staff but also with others involved in similar work.

In March 2013 Safe Network held its first three Webinars. They focused on ‘Safer Recruitment, Disclosure and Barring’, ‘Online Safety’ and ‘Best Safeguarding Practice’. Expert speakers were involved from organisations including the DBS, UK Safer Internet Centre and frontline groups. Whilst access to the Webinars was free for Champions as part of the development opportunities offered in their role, a charge was made for other participants. Over the three events, 111 people participated (there were 184 places available), and feedback from these first sessions was highly positive with the only negatives relating to technical issues and/or some elements of the session being not at the right level for a small number of participants.

**Outcomes and learning**

**Increased accessibility of learning/information-sharing opportunities:** It is too early to draw any firm conclusions at this time about the extent to which using new media may increase the accessibility or Safe Network to its target audiences, or help the Network support Champions/supporters of its work who are struggling to engage owing to pressures of time. However the high levels of attendance at the Network’s first webinars and the very positive feedback suggest these could be an important tool for helping people more easily stay up-to-date, informed and engaged with safeguarding issues. The feedback from those who attended reflects high levels of satisfaction, useful learning across all topic areas, and an appreciation of the webinar medium/approach from a majority of participants:

> Easy to access - no travelling time needed and much cheaper than attending similar 'live' training.

> A fantastic way of informing people about safe practice.

**An expanded training programme:** There has been much learning about technical issues and how to successfully deliver activities like webinars, and Network staff report more confidence in running and facilitating these events. Learning from having trialled the webinars is that paying did not put people off joining. The Network is optimistic that this activity could be self-sustaining in the future, with delegate fees covering costs. Regular webinars will now be part of the Network’s training ‘offer’.

**Increased creativity:** The Network reports that reduced financial resources and increased demand has had one positive impact in that it has forced partners to think creatively about how it engages its key stakeholder groups:

> The expectations on the sector and on us, and the pressure on our resources and capacity … I suppose what it has done is make us look at what we’re producing, what we’re trying to do, and try to come up with creative ways to do things that are as cost effective as possible. You could say it’s forced us to be more creative.
7. Conclusion and recommendations

7.1 Conclusion

Making a difference to the VCS

Over the past two years, Safe Network has delivered a wide range of services and has met or exceeded most of its delivery targets. Its resources and activities receive exceptionally high satisfaction ratings from the many VCS organisations it supports. We have identified a variety of positive outcomes for VCS organisations, and certainly it has achieved its four core outcomes for the sector - helping ensure that more organisations:

- have safeguards in place to protect children from harm or abuse
- have adopted safer recruitment practices
- understand, assess and manage risk in their provision of activities; and
- understand theirs and others’ roles in safeguarding.

For the several thousand organisations with whom it is now in regular contact, Safe Network has also played a vital role in keeping the sector up-to-date, informed, and reassured during a period of considerable change.

The question that we have found it more difficult to answer is ‘how many?’ That is, how many organisations has Safe Network made a difference for, how many have achieved these outcomes and are now better able to safeguard children and operate more safely as a result of Safe Network’s support?

Our best estimates based on the available data are that over the past two years more than 12,000 organisations have received training based on Safe Network materials; 1,200 have received support directly from Safe Network Champions and the Standards resources have been downloaded over 30,000 times. (We report these figures as best estimates as we do not know how many individuals/organisations may have attended several training events, or where several individuals from the same organisation might have accessed the same resource.)

What we also know, however, is that these figures are likely to underestimate the real number of beneficiaries, possibly quite considerably. We base this conclusion on the number of instances where we came across organisations ‘spreading the word’ and passing on information and/or using Safe Network resources where this was unknown to Safe Network and not captured in any programme monitoring. For instance, 87% of our survey respondents reported that they had subsequently been able to share their learning with others within and/or outside of their organisation. While in some cases this might be simply with two or three colleagues, in others we found this could amount to hundreds of individuals and/or groups. For instance, one child accident prevention mentee we interviewed said that she shared information from the Making the Link newsletter with a mailing list in her area of about 100 contacts, and just one organisation responding to our survey was about to distribute information and links to its members. When we explored further we found that it works with over 400 private, voluntary and independent childcare organisations.
Whilst we appreciate there is an important difference between seeing Safe Network resources and using the information they contain to improve practice, nonetheless this still suggests that the reach and at least the potential influence of Safe Network may be far wider than the Network’s monitoring data currently suggests.

**Increasing support for the VCS from other sources (investing in infrastructure)**

Within our evaluation we set out to assess whether Safe Network has contributed to more and better support being available for the VCS through local infrastructure and national umbrella and membership organisations, and whether it has enabled commissioners to better understand and value the VCS safeguarding role.

Once again we could answer both questions positively. There are Champions in place across all nine regions and the VCS infrastructure organisations who host them have been positive about how Safe Network has boosted their capacity to offer high quality safeguarding support to groups in a more efficient and effective way. At a more strategic level, the Network has engaged effectively across all regions with local decision-makers, LSCBs and commissioners, and has begun to contribute to a raised profile for the VCS and its safeguarding role, and increased recognition and support for that role. We found evidence that LSCBs and commissioners appreciate the quality of the work done by Safe Network and Making the Link; the usefulness of the Safe Network Standards as a tool for improving and assessing safeguarding standards within the VCS; and the way in which the Network’s support contributes to achievement of their business objectives and increases their capacity to reach groups that many had previously defined as ‘hard to reach’.

As with the Network’s success in reaching and supporting frontline organisations, we have found that with these infrastructure outcomes again it has been hard to quantify, to be definitive about the Network’s reach and influence, and the Network’s own monitoring may underestimate its impact. For instance, we found many VCS infrastructure organisations are supporting the Network, actively promoting it, even offering training based on Safe Network materials, but are not registered as Champions and therefore their work is not ‘counted’ in the Network’s monitoring of its reach and engagement.

**What next for Safe Network?**

Our evaluation has demonstrated that there is still a clear need within the sector for the support Safe Network offers, and much work still left to do. The VCS groups engaged in our evaluation have no doubt that the Network needs to continue, that there is still considerable need for its support, not least because they believe that there are still many organisations who do not know about it.

> There’s a lot more informing to be done. A lot more work is needed to reach the ‘hard to reach’ groups and to get a lot more people in the know. We need to cascade this not just to children and youth organisations but also to the many others like uniformed groups or faith groups, … the kinds of groups that don’t see themselves as a youth organisation but they’re working with young people, they’re a priority but they’re in danger of falling though the net.
Statutory partners within Local Authorities and Safeguarding Boards also feel that there is more work to be done.

_"I think there’s a real value in the way they can help Safeguarding Boards take forward their work, and I don’t think we’ve realised the full potential of that yet. There will still be more to do. I think we can now look at developing things in the longer-term. I anticipate more training and events, more sessions where we can get together with other sectors to take things forward, to get people together to talk about areas of common interest. We recognise that the voluntary sector is key to delivering on the agendas we’re concerned with, including the early help agenda which we’re now picking up on, and good collaboration with them will be crucial. With so much changing, it’s important that we’re not there to scare people or dictate to them about safeguarding but to take them with us, and Safe Network is helping with that._

### 7.2 Recommendations

We have developed a number of recommendations for Safe Network to consider as it moves into a new phase of activity from April 2013. These recommendations are based in part on our own analysis of the data, and in part on the ideas and suggestions of Safe Network stakeholders. We asked all participants in our evaluation how they felt Safe Network could be improved and/or what it should prioritise in the future. The majority asked for the Network to continue to offer what it has been, or to offer more of the same, in more areas and/or to more groups. Our recommendations reflect those areas where stakeholders felt most strongly about elements of the programme continuing, but where specific ideas and suggestions were raised for future work or improvements, we have also tried to reflect those.

**Overview of recommendations**

1. Ensure that services and resources continue to be free or low cost
2. Review the Champions model, and the role and expectations of Champions
3. Continue to invest in people as well as products
4. Continue to prioritise work with LSCBs
5. Consider ways to better share learning and successes
6. Consider how to better evidence the effectiveness of different activities/resources
7. Continue to act as a champion for the VCS on safeguarding issues.

As we write this report, we are aware that thanks to earlier formative evaluation reporting, the Network has responded to much of this feedback from its stakeholders, and from our own earlier identification of learning and key messages as they emerged from our fieldwork and analysis. This responsiveness to interim findings and feedback means that some of these recommendations have already been taken forward, and are therefore reflected in the Network’s future plans. We nonetheless felt it important to reiterate our recommendations here within this final report.
Recommendation 1: Maintain free or low cost access to support

VCS organisations and Champions felt strongly that advice and information on safeguarding should be free for the sector as far as possible. Champions and staff within infrastructure organisations who were promoting Safe Network materials felt most strongly that a move towards charging would potentially exclude some of those organisations most in need of safeguarding support, particularly small and volunteer-led organisations. Frontline organisations themselves mentioned the importance of the fact that resources are free as one of the elements they most value about the programme with some explicitly stating that the cost of resources and/or training had previously acted as a barrier to accessing safeguarding support.

_Sustainability will be key but I think it will be incredibly important not to go down the route of charging. What's exciting about Safe Network is that if you have nothing, you can still access something and it's free. This is important. … My worry is if they try to sustain it by charging._

_It's very important that these things are free. It isn't that groups don't value what's offered, but they simply don't have the funds and it will inevitably put people off._

_We simply can't afford £100 here or there for training or to buy a CD or a pack. Lots of groups would be in the same boat I think. It might not sound much to some, but it would be more than we have._

Recommendation 2: Review the Champions model and role

In the light of pressures on the VCS infrastructure and challenges raised by Champions themselves, we recommend that the role be reviewed and that this review considers expectations, resourcing and support. There are concerns about the sustainability of the model if it continues as it is and participants in our evaluation suggested the following options might usefully be considered:

- The establishment of a two-tier system - with a network of ‘supporters’ but also a network of more active Champions with delivery targets. This would involve the establishment or recognition of a less formal network of Champions with reduced expectations of delivery - more like ‘supporters; who are recognised and supported but without specific delivery targets to meet but who might still monitor work done and report back to Safe Network.

- The Network should explore resourcing for Champions, either centrally through the programme, or through partnership arrangements with statutory bodies in local areas, so that, for instance, some Champions could have their expenses or actual costs covered for delivering a core programme locally under the direction of their RDM.

- The Network could consider developing accredited training options for Champions so as to enhance their ability to deliver training and increase their credibility as safeguarding training providers.
So many colleagues have come up to me and said, ‘… we use Safe Network … it’s brilliant, … but we just don’t want to be Champions because we can't make that commitment to you.’ For many that has been about not wanting to let people down.

We may need to look at how this work is resourced. Paying small sums of money or expenses can be inefficient because of the time it takes to administer any system, but there are issues to explore there.

I could see more scope for LCSBs to promote the Champions role. Locally, the only other way we could sponsor it I suppose, I know from my experience in the voluntary sector before this, is that statutory organisations often expect voluntary organisations to do things without funds, so could we as a Board cover the costs of releasing people to be Champions? Financial support could make a difference, for example you could pay for half a day maybe three days a year. It wouldn’t be much for a statutory organisation but could make all the difference to a voluntary organisation, that sort of small-scale financial help could be a good way forward. Our LSCB already has a system where we pay expenses to organisations that are releasing lay representatives who attend the Board via the Hub so that’s the kind of thing I’m thinking of.

Could we have Safe Network identity badges and be recognised as accredited trainers for the Network. I think that kind of thing would also help open more doors.

**Recommendation 3: Invest in people as well as products**

The benefits of having RDMs and Champions on the ground to promote good practice were appreciated across all stakeholder groups, and there was a strong feeling that good resources and products on their own may not effect real change in the way that good products supported by good people can.

We found evidence that local support has made a significant difference to both the reach and take-up of the programme and its resources, but also to the achievement of positive outcomes for many VCS organisations.

*If the infrastructure doesn’t survive that would be damaging. Just having things available doesn’t get them to the organisations that need them.*

*You can’t just have the materials. You still need people on the ground to help with it … to support groups to use the materials and take things forward.*
Recommendation 4: Continue to prioritise work with LSCBs

Champions felt strongly that work with LSCBs could be key to increasing the reach of Safe Network and to the sustainability of the programme in the longer term. Based on their own experience and their observations of developments elsewhere around the country, they identified LSCBs as having the influence and capacity to make the most difference in promoting better safeguarding practice, particularly by adopting, endorsing or promoting the Standards and ensuring that local support for the VCS is more accessible.

As a part of Safe Network’s work to look at models for sustainability, it has developed a virtual ‘portfolio’ of services and products that it could offer LSCBs. It is not yet clear whether or not LSCBs will purchase services and/or resource elements of Safe Network’s offer but undoubtedly they can exert a major influence on levels of take-up in a local area, which suggests engagement with LSCBs should continue to be a priority for the Network. As one long-term Champion summed it up:

“I think it’s a great approach overall, just limited by capacity. The materials are all good but I worry about sustainability. … I think maybe it’s partly about trying to get the people with the statutory responsibility to take it on, so via the LSCB has to be the way to get the message out because I can see less and less money in local authorities and underfunding in infrastructure. I don’t think it’s going to be easy, but I feel it should happen because truthfully many LSCBs’ own Safeguarding materials are the Easyjet to Safe Network’s Rolls Royce!”

Recommendation 5: Share learning and successes

Improving the way the Network shares its learning and successes would benefit areas and organisations who are keen to adopt new ways of working but don’t want to ‘reinvent wheels’, and would also help it market its products and services more effectively. We found an appetite for learning from other areas about how to better promote safeguarding. We found that case studies from both Safe Network websites were among the most popular downloads, and several of the LSCB representatives we interviewed requested more practical examples of work done elsewhere. Participants in our evaluation also felt the Network could improve its marketing by sharing its successes more, not just in numbers but in stories about where the Network has made a difference:

“It’s very useful to see what other areas are doing but sometimes when I look at the examples of other areas I wonder how they’ve done it. For instance I heard about … (this) project, it sounded great, but then it doesn’t help you find out how they’ve done it, what made that happen.

The website would benefit from a list of endorsements – this would build the credibility of the Standards and other materials if there was a kind of “endorsed by” list with some quotes or testimonials from LSCBs or commissioners or other organisations that others could read to see where Safe Network has made a difference.”
Recommendation 6: Improve understanding of what works best

In the course of our evaluation we found a number of potentially important questions difficult to answer either because of gaps in the available data, or because they were simply outside of the scope of our original plan. In particular we have not been able to authoritatively answer questions which elements of the programme make the most difference, are the most effective.

There is a gap in routine data collection that would allow the Network to understand in more detail how organisations are using its support, and their outcomes. Champions, who work most closely with VCS organisations, report that they do not have the capacity to follow-up with groups to see what changes, they make, if any, after attending training or a support session about the Standards. There is also not a routine follow-up system to track how the Standards are being used by groups who use them and/or complete self-assessments. If possible, it would be useful for the Network to establish some kind of follow-up outcomes tracking system to enable it to more routinely gather information about how resources and support are being used, and with what results, and/or to revisit the Champions’ role in reporting and in helping the Network collect more robust data on outcomes for VCS organisations.

Safe Network may also wish to review its priorities for monitoring and data collection so that it can better understand the evidence-base for different elements of the programme and the costs and benefits of different approaches – particularly where it has innovated and tried new ways of working but it was too early for our evaluation to identify the outcomes of these new approaches. For instance, it might be of interest to consider questions such as:

- What it costs to support and train a Champion and what is the return on that investment as regards numbers of groups engaged, increased availability of local support, improved quality of support? How might that investment compare to other interventions – for instance, an investment of time in working in-depth with a LSCB?
- What impact does LSCB endorsement have? Does it result in more engagement from the local VCS? Are there significant differences in take-up of the Standards comparing areas with and without Champions, or with and without LSCB endorsement?
- Does having a customised/localised Standards resource result in a better take-up of the Standards than simply having a local areas endorse and support the national Standards?

These and other similar questions might be important as the Network faces decisions about how to sustain its programme, and may need to prioritise those activities which have the most impact.

*It's pretty clear austerity is here to stay. Like the rest of the sector Safe Network will need to make the maximum use of what it has. We know we've made a difference but it would be good to know more about what works best and where to really invest our resources to make the most difference.*
Recommendation 7: Continue to act as a champion for the sector’s role

We found clear evidence that the sector trusts Safe Network, that it has become a ‘brand’ associated with reliability, with being VCS-focused, and with having the interests of the sector, and the children and young people it works with, at heart. Many organisations feel that one of the Network’s strengths is that its activities are based on a real understanding of their needs, and that it is ‘there for them’, and this is something they feel should not be lost.

Champions and infrastructure organisations told us that working with Safe Network has helped them improve statutory partners’ understanding of their safeguarding role and challenges, and some LSCB staff also agreed that this was a beneficial outcome of the Network’s activities. Those involved in national work on safeguarding also believe that Safe Network has an important role to play in ensuring that there is better appreciation of and support for the VCS’ safeguarding role at a national and strategic level. They want the Network to continue in this awareness-raising and ‘championing’ role.

More than ever, with the recent stories in the media … thankfully not involving the sector … but they still reinforce the need for Safe Network to be out there, promoting good practice and getting the message out at the highest level that thousands of children benefit from what the voluntary sector has to offer and that has to be supported. Continuing to get out the message that safeguarding is everyone’s business is crucial and that’s where I see Safe Network’s unique contribution.

We’re champions because we care about this issue, Safe Network needs to continue to act as the sector’s champion.

Charities Evaluation Services
April 2013
8. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Safe Network portfolio of services

Objective 1: Websites and resources

- **Safe Network website** is a source of help, advice, information and ideas on safeguarding issues for the VCS and those who work with the sector or otherwise have an interest in safeguarding issues. It offers information on news and events including training; and a resource bank that gives access to a range of free downloadable resources, templates, policies and procedures, case studies and the Safe Network Standards. Anyone can access the site, though to download resources individuals need to register. Subscribers can also register for a **monthly e-bulletin** to keep up to date with safeguarding and Network news.

- The **Safe Network Standards** were launched in February 2011 but revised and re-launched early in 2012. They are available on the Safe Network website. They cover four essential safeguarding areas: safer staff and volunteers – recruitment, induction and supervision; child protection; preventing and responding to bullying; and running safe activities and events and avoiding accidents. The Standards are accompanied by an online self-assessment tool that organisations can work through section by section, with links throughout to resource toolboxes to support groups with practical ideas for addressing any gaps or areas identified for action as a part of the self-assessment process. The toolbox contains policies, procedures, templates, posters, leaflets, other materials.

- **Are They Safe?** is a resource aimed primarily at leaders of groups within the VCS who are starting out or at a relatively early stage of thinking about safeguarding. It guides group leaders through a nine-step approach to planning what safeguards should be put in place – described as “a pathway to safer practice” – signposting sources of practical support and advice along the way. Organisations can also download a folder and wallchart to store relevant policies and procedures and record their progress.

- ‘**Keeping Our Children Safe: raising awareness in black and minority ethnic communities**’ is a modular training resource (CD-Rom) aimed at facilitators and trainers wanting to raise awareness of safeguarding issues in BME communities.

- **Safe Organisations, Safe Children** is a modular training resource aimed at managers, trainers or facilitators wanting to train a group of people on safeguarding in their own organisation or across a number of organisations. The training is closely linked to the Safe Network Standards to help ensure a joined-up approach to safeguarding good practice.

- The **Making the Link website** provides information, advice, and resources to support senior practitioners and policymakers working to prevent unintentional injury to children and young people. It contains a news section, copies of recent e-bulletins and other CAPT resources, policy updates, facts and statistics on unintentional injury and practical tools to support work on prevention. Visitors to the site can sign up for a **monthly e-bulletin** on accident prevention issues and news.
- **CAPT resources**, made available via the *Making the Link* website, include case studies, learning nuggets and briefings on accidental injury prevention.

**Objective 2: Training and events**

- **Safe Network training** includes direct training to VCS organisations on a range of safeguarding issues, training for Safe Network champions, and training for infrastructure organisations, LSCBs and commissioners. The Safe Network team, particularly RDMs, also help organise local, regional and national events aimed at promoting Safe Network resources, and often input (via presentations, conference addresses and workshops) into relevant events organised by other Network or local partners.

- **EduCare training** is an online safeguarding training package available through the NSPCC, that though not developed by Safe Network is nonetheless promoted through the programme as a way of increasing the accessibility of training to those who may not have access to, or the capacity to attend, face-to-face safeguarding training.

- **CAPT training** covers a range of workshops and master classes aimed at commissioners and senior practitioners within both voluntary and statutory sectors. Like RDMs, CAPT team members also take opportunities to promote Safe Network and *Making the Link*, and to raise awareness of accident prevention and safeguarding issues, by representing the Network at other relevant local and national events, conferences and workshops as the opportunity arises.

**Objective 3: Safeguarding advice and support**

- **Outreach advice and support** is a part of the role of RDMs, who offer support and advice on safeguarding issues to Champions in their region, and to colleagues within LSCBs, Local Authorities and VCS infrastructure organisations.

- **Safeguarding enquiry service** - providing a response to safeguarding telephone and website/email enquiries is a part of the work of Safe Network, and is dealt with by the central team at the NSPCC.

**Objective 4: Safeguarding champions programme**

- The **Safe Network Champions** programme is seen as the cornerstone of regional and local support for VCS organisations. Under RDMs the Champions act as Safe Network representatives within their local community. They are primarily Champions for the Safeguarding Standards, trained to support VCS organisations in the use of the Standards and other Safe Network resources, and with a remit to promote good safeguarding practice within the sector. Champions are usually recruited from infrastructure organisations, with some from generic VCS second-tier organisations, others from CYPF VCS second-tier organisations, and some from specialist and sub-sector organisations. Champions are required to commit to delivering at least one event focused on the Standards, and one follow-up support option, eg, a safeguarding advice clinic, each year. (Some LSCBs and Local Authorities are also signed up as Champions and though this commits them to championing the Standards, their role in this regard is generally different.)
Objective 5: Engagement and partnerships with local decision-makers

- **Engagement with LSCBs and Local Authorities** generally takes place through Children England and the network of RDMs, though often in partnership with local Champions who may represent the VCS on relevant local partnerships and/or on the LSCB. The nature of the engagement varies depending on local circumstances but often involves promotion of the Standards and working with the LSCB or Local Authority to embed better safeguarding practice within the local VCS, including through adopting the Standards as a commissioning requirement.

- The **Making the Link mentoring programme** is aimed at helping Local Authority Childhood Accident Prevention Leads and/or public health teams embed child safety into local strategies and new commissioning arrangements. Four Local Authority areas are being mentored under the Safe Network programme and the mentoring support aims to enhance knowledge and skills, support partnership working, and enable local commissioners to identify more effective and cost-effective accident prevention interventions that meet the needs of local children and families.

Objective 6: Engagement with national and sub-sector bodies

- All three Safe Network partners are involved in **work with national partners and relevant sub-sector organisations** to exert a wider influence on safeguarding practice within the VCS, to raise awareness of the Standards and/or to jointly agree adapted versions of the Standards that work for particular sections of the VCS.

Objective 7: Engagement with parents/carers

- **Engagement with parents/carers** involves ensuring that where possible they, alongside children and young people, have some input into the development of any new resources developed by Safe Network, but more usually it involves ensuring that appropriate signposting and referral takes place between Safe Network partners and other more parent/carer-focused organisations better placed to advise on issues and offer support from a parent/carer perspective.

The output targets in relation to each of these areas of activity are outlined in tabular form in Appendix 3.
Appendix 2 – Evaluation activities and sample

**Desk research**

Our desk research included an analysis of the following documents relating to the programme:

- **Plans and minutes** – including Safe Network Business Plans, papers on sustainability of the Network, minutes of national Network meetings
- **Newsletters** - Champions and Partners E-bulletins, LSCB bi-monthly newsletters, Making the Link bulletins
- **Monitoring and evaluation data** - both primary and secondary source materials including collated feedback data from training/events, website feedback data, evaluation reports
- **Reports** - monthly KPI update reports and quarterly funders reports
- **Resources** – Safe Network and Making the Link resources, case studies, websites and downloads
- **Local reports and resources** – we analysed local websites, reports and resources to help us produce case studies.

**Fieldwork activities and sample**

**Surveys**

Our online survey of VCS organisations was open to, and promoted to, all VCS organisations who have joined a Safe Network mailing list and/or all those visiting the Safe Network website during the period the survey was open (February 2012 and February 2013). Promotion of the survey took place via email notification by Safe Network partners and a link placed on the Safe Network website.

All Champions registered with Safe Network as at February 2013 were invited to participate in our online Champions survey, which was open for responses for four weeks in February 2013. The invitation to take part was sent out via Regional Development Managers (RDMs). We had hoped to engage 50 Champions out of a potential sample of 75. Only 26 took part in our survey, and only 15 Champions actually completed the survey. In order to boost our overall sample of Champions we doubled the size of our interview sample enabling us to collect more in-depth information from 15 Champions rather than the seven originally intended. This brought the total number of Champions engaged within our evaluation overall to 34.

We achieved a sample of 255 VCS organisations and 26 Champions via surveys.

**Interviews**

To identify VCS organisations and Champions for interviews we created a stratified random sample. We did this at three points (March 2012, September 2012 and February 2013), creating lists each time comprised of those who had given consent to be contacted for evaluation purposes (either within their online survey response or within feedback forms completed after Safe Network training/events). We sorted the lists by region then sampled randomly within regional lists to identify a cross-section of organisations from across the whole area of operation of Safe Network.
We used purposive sampling to identify a sample of LSCB representatives and national partners for interviews as we wanted to focus our investigation on areas where we knew one or more Safe Network partners were actively engaged. Likewise for our case study interviews our approach was purposive; we identified individuals and areas based on prior knowledge of where the Network was active and/or areas we identified as being of interest based on themes or topics of interest emerging from earlier stages of our fieldwork.

Our sample of 58 individuals engaged through qualitative interviewing comprised 25 representatives of voluntary organisations; 15 Champions; 14 local statutory partners and 4 national partners. We also interviewed the three core Safe Network partners and a member of the Safe Network National Advisory Group.

Across all fieldwork activities we achieved a sample with the following characteristics:

- 267 organisations, of which 182 (68%) were VCS frontline organisations, and 51 (19%) infrastructure/second-tier VCS organisations. The remainder (34, 13%) were individuals or organisations in the private, independent or statutory sector.
- 63% of VCS organisations were small/medium (under 15 paid staff).
- 195 organisations had accessed Safe Network resources, 189 had accessed advice and information and 77 had accessed Safe Network training. 231 had accessed more than one element of Safe Network’s support.
- Of the 34 Champions we engaged, 30 were based in local infrastructure organisations and 4 in national or regional subsector/membership organisations.
- We interviewed 10 LSCB representatives from across eight of the nine regions.
## Appendix 3 – Safe Network targets

For the VCS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Targets</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Training and events:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safe Network training and events</td>
<td>1,000 frontline groups pa. supported via training, workshops and events</td>
<td>1. <strong>Safer employment:</strong> More VCS organisations will have increased knowledge and awareness of safer employment practice. More organisations’ employment practices will be demonstrably safer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(including input at partner events)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online (EduCare) training</td>
<td>5,500 register for Educare training over the two years.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Websites and resources:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safe Network website and resources</td>
<td>80,000 visits year 1; 200,000 year 2 12,000 pa download Standards resources 10,000 access Are they Safe? 1,000 BME resources distributed 500 participate in modular training New resources - for deaf and disabled children, on mental health, and on work in rural areas.</td>
<td>2. <strong>Child safeguarding:</strong> More VCS organisations will understand how to minimise the risk of emotional and physical harm for children and young people (eg, from bullying or unintentional injury). More will have effective and proportionate arrangements for assessing and managing risk in activities with CYP.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VCS Safe Network E-bulletin</td>
<td>12 e-bulletins pa</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Advice and support:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2-1 advice to groups from central office</td>
<td>375 groups supported pa</td>
<td>3. <strong>Child protection:</strong> More VCS organisations will understand their role in protecting children and young people from abuse. More will have effective safeguards in place to prevent the abuse of CYP.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop a network of 150 Champions</td>
<td>To support 1,200 groups pa To offer 75 regional support opportunities pa</td>
<td>4. <strong>Working together:</strong> More VCS organisations will have an awareness of local safeguarding arrangements, and a better understanding of where they fit within these arrangements.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
For infrastructure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Targets</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Training and events for commissioners and senior practitioners:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>5. <strong>Local support for good practice in safeguarding:</strong> More local support for safeguarding will be available through a network of safeguarding champions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAPT accident prevention workshops for commissioners and VCS</td>
<td>6 workshops pa. for local commissioners and the VCS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAPT master classes to be held</td>
<td>4 master classes in year 1; 3 in year 2</td>
<td>6. <strong>LSCB engagement with the VCS on safeguarding issues:</strong> LSCBs will better recognise, value and support the role of the VCS in safeguarding children and young people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Websites and resources:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>7. <strong>Local commissioners’ engagement with the VCS on safeguarding issues:</strong> More local commissioners will recognise, value and support the VCS’ safeguarding role within the new commissioning environment. Local commissioning will better integrated, with safeguarding and childhood accident prevention embedded within commissioning strategies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAPT website and resources - briefings for commissioners; good practice case studies; resources</td>
<td>12,000 hits a year on Making the Link site 12 briefings pa. (6 nuggets, 6 topics) 4 good practice case studies pa 12 e-bulletins pa.</td>
<td>8. <strong>National and subsector support for good practice in safeguarding:</strong> More national and subsector organisations will engage in work to promote best practice in safeguarding (establishing clear safeguarding standards) across VCS.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quarterly briefings to champions and LCSBs from Children England</td>
<td>4 briefings a year</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accident Prevention Mentoring Scheme</td>
<td>Four areas to participate in scheme.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>In-depth/strategic work:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development work with local commissioners, LSCBs and infrastructure organisations on Standards</td>
<td>100 local authority areas to be endorsing/using Standards (40 Year 1; 60 Year 2) 6 areas to receive in-depth support and 4 pilots developed in relation to joint work on the Standards in a local area</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnerships with national (statutory, professional governmental) organisations/ networks</td>
<td>10 national/branch organisations to adopt the Standards and 5 umbrella organisations.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>