

Staying Safe

Consultation Response Form

The closing date for this consultation is: 31
October 2007

Your comments must reach us by that date.

department for
children, schools and families

THIS FORM IS NOT INTERACTIVE. If you wish to respond electronically please use the online or offline response facility available on the Department for Children, Schools and Families e-consultation website (<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/consultations>).

The information you provide in your response will be subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and Environmental Information Regulations, which allow public access to information held by the Department. This does not necessarily mean that your response can be made available to the public as there are exemptions relating to information provided in confidence and information to which the Data Protection Act 1998 applies. You may request confidentiality by ticking the box provided, but you should note that neither this, nor an automatically-generated e-mail confidentiality statement, will necessarily exclude the public right of access.

Please tick if you want us to keep your response confidential.

Name Dr Jenny McWhirter
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If your enquiry is related to the policy content of the consultation you can contact the Staying Safe Consultation Team by e-mail: staying.safe@dcsf.gsi.gov.uk.

If you have a query relating to the consultation process you can contact the Consultation Unit on:

Telephone: 01928 794888

Fax: 01928 794 113

e-mail: consultation.unit@dcsf.gsi.gov.uk

Which of the following best describes you:

<input type="checkbox"/> Child (Under 13)	<input type="checkbox"/> Young Person (Under 18)	<input type="checkbox"/> Parent
<input type="checkbox"/> Professional working with children and young people	<input type="checkbox"/> Volunteer working with children and young people	<input type="checkbox"/> Other X (Please specify)

Please Specify:

RoSPA is a national charity whose aim is to save lives and prevent injury. Dr Jenny McWhirter is **RoSPA**'s risk education adviser.

If you work with children or young people, which best describes the organisation you work in:

<input type="checkbox"/> Local Authority	<input type="checkbox"/> School	<input type="checkbox"/> Further or Higher Education Institution
<input type="checkbox"/> Private Sector Organisation	<input type="checkbox"/> Voluntary and x Community Sector Organisation	<input type="checkbox"/> Health Organisation
<input type="checkbox"/> Youth Justice Organisation	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Please specify)	

Please Specify: **RoSPA** is a national charity whose aim is to save lives and prevent injury. We seek to engage with young people in our work to promote sensible safety for young people.

General Questions

1 a) How safe do you think children are?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Very safe	x Safe	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not very safe
<input type="checkbox"/>	Not sure			

Comments:

Safety is a broad term encompassing physical social and emotional aspects. RoSPA's response to this consultation will focus on accident and injury prevention since it our mission to save lives and reduce injuries.

However, we are aware that children and young people interpret the words 'safe' and 'safety' in different ways, depending on their experience. Children in some urban areas are concerned about knife and gun crime, while those in rural areas are concerned about having safe places to go to be with their friends who may live some distance away. All children and young people are concerned to keep their feelings safe – whether this is from bullying peers or adults who disapprove of their behaviour and activities. Accidents are more likely to happen when we are under stress, so by addressing children and young people's concerns about social and emotional safety we may also contribute to preventing injuries.

It is important to keep a sense of perspective about children's safety. Although most children and young people are involved in minor accidents and near misses and many report sometimes feeling unsafe, fewer young people are killed or seriously injured in the UK than in many other countries in Europe and around the world.

1 b) How good are we at giving children and young people the opportunity to explore, understand risks for themselves and to learn the skills vital for their development?

Comments: Recently there has been widespread concern that efforts to help children and young people stay safe has limited their freedom to explore, experience challenge, take risks and learn valuable lessons from that experience. See for example Cotton Wool Kids (HTI); Better Safe the Sorry (Audit Commission) At **RoSPA** we advocate that children should be as safe as necessary, rather than as safe as possible.

Young people have told us that they agree that adults' efforts to keep them safe are sometime overprotective and this prevents them from having fun with their friends. However, young people are also aware that parents in particular have a difficult task. Younger children we consulted felt parents knew a lot about keeping safe from their own experience, but older teenagers thought parents were out of touch and that 'things are different for us'. Young people think that their parents are influenced by what they read and see in the national media and think this does not always relate to their own experience in their local area.

Young people told us they feel safe to enjoy some freedom when parents listen to their views and trust them to take some responsibility for their own safety. Mobile phones offer a mechanism for keeping in touch with parents and carers as well as friends. One young person expressed the wish that her Mum would learn how to text as this was the best way to keep in touch.

2 If you are a parent, what concerns do you have about your children's safety and how do you address these?

Comments:

As a parent I have had the same concerns and fears for my children as many others. I tried to keep a sense of perspective and recognise that high profile cases of child abduction or teenage gangs are rare and that accidents on the road and at home are more common. I tried to build up a sense of shared responsibility for keeping safe so that they recognised that while they had a part to play, other adults, including drivers, police, teachers and youth workers also had responsibility. Now my children are grown up they advise me about keeping safe!

3 If you are a child or young person yourself, are the views of children and young people included here the same as yours and those of your friends?

Comments:

4 a) As a member of the public, do you feel a sense of responsibility for protecting children?

Yes

No

Not Sure

Comments: It is my perception that adults have become increasingly concerned that, if they intervene to help children to stay safe, other adults may misinterpret this. Parents of the child concerned may see an intervention as challenging their child-care practices or as a direct threat to the personal safety of the child. For example, if my husband, formerly a senior police officer, sees a young child out alone, apparently lost, he will always ask me to speak to the child in case his actions are misunderstood.

In addition, adults are sometimes afraid to speak to older children and teenagers who may, by their dress and manner appear intimidating. Most young people are sensible and well behaved, but the publicity given to cases where teenagers have reacted aggressively to adult intervention has deterred many adults from interacting positively with young people. These perceptions can disable adults from following their natural instinct to intervene early and prevent harm.

4 b) How can we build this sense of responsibility in local communities?

Comments: Safety campaigns often focus on the responsibility of the individual to keep themselves safe, or on parents. Campaigns which focus on individual children are often ineffective since they do not address the underlying social and economic factors, or, by making parents and young people fearful, they risk unintended consequences by reducing other healthy activity.

Campaigns which are targeted at parents have to steer a difficult course between advising and informing parents and blaming them. Most accidents to under 5s do happen in the home, but we should be wary of suggesting that home is not a safe place for most children.

A recent advertisement for the DfT Think campaign is a good example of this balanced approach (Observer, 14th October 2007). – it recognises that young children copy their parents' behaviour and reinforces the importance of parents modelling safe ways to cross the road using a sensitive, positive approach. However, the campaign should go on to target other adults so that they similarly model good road safety behaviour, by not crossing on red lights. We need to recognise that parents also set an example to their children when driving and that safe driving habits may begin in the car seat if not the cradle. **RoSPA** offers advice to parents via www.helpingLdrivers.com

5 If you work with children and young people, do you know what your role is in keeping children safe?

Yes

No

Not Sure

Comments:

My role is to work in an evidence-based way whether it is with children and young people, their parents, teachers or the wider community. When researching children and young people's understanding I have duty to report my findings in a way that can influence both policy and practice. It is also my responsibility to safeguard children in all encounters, professionally and personally.

6 Have we got the right balance between keeping children safe and also allowing them the freedom to develop?

Yes

No

Not Sure

Comments:

There is a growing body of opinion that we have not got the balance right at the moment – and young people agree. While overprotection of children is not the only cause of the obesity epidemic it is clear that children's activity levels are falling and some of this is due to parents' fears for their children's safety. No one wants children or young people to be at risk, but **RoSPA** would like to see children and young people more able enjoy physical and emotional challenge. While this will sometimes involve the risk of injury, a better understanding by adults of children's need for challenge, and the benefits for their development, will help to reduce the probability of serious harm.

7 a) Are the roles and responsibilities set out in Chapter 2 correct?

Yes

No

Not Sure

Comments:

The focus is very much on personal safety and not on injury prevention, which is by far the most common cause of harm to children generally. A similar structure for injury prevention would be welcome.

7 b) What should the role of central Government be, and what is the responsibility of local organisations and communities?

Comments:

Central government should ensure practice is evidence based, through advice, information and ultimately through inspection. It should provide core funding for essential services and support the voluntary sector through grant making to work effectively nationally and locally. Local authorities, PCTs and community organisations should ensure they have good knowledge of local factors which affect children's safety and direct local and national funds to areas of greatest need. Local organisations should ensure the voices of local people (including young people) are heard through consultation and active engagement to identify problems, to suggest and help to implement solutions.

8 How can local and central Government do more to protect all children by reaching out to minority communities and those speaking minority languages?

Comments:

9 Are the areas we have identified for new action right? What other areas could be considered and what more could we do?

Yes

No

Not Sure

Comments:

Some of the actions (e.g. to include a module for safety education within the PSHE CPD programme) address several of the issues raised in this response. However this example will only support those *teachers* who have an interest in PSHE, whereas **RoSPA** believes this is the responsibility of all teachers. Many other professionals (fire and rescue services and charities) work in school on safety issues and **RoSPA** would like to see this module made available to these practitioners also, to avoid differing standards of practice causing confusion for young people and their teachers and parents.

The findings from the research study into the effectiveness of safety education should also be disseminated within the organisations that develop these resources and promote their use in schools, to improve the quality of their work.

It is unclear to what extent parents have been involved in deciding some of these actions and so am unsure about the effectiveness of some of the proposals. There is a sense, from the ways some actions are described, that parents need to be told about the risks to their children and then encouraged to let them take risk (p 40 3.52 and p42 3.58 for example). This needs more careful thought. There should be more emphasis on engaging with parents to identify and solve problems and involve them in implementing solutions rather than a top down model based on a perception that parents don't know how to keep their children safe.

Chapter 3 – Helping all children and young people to stay safe

10 Would parents welcome a communications campaign and information on play and positive activities in their local area?

Yes

No

Not Sure

Comments: As long as it did not aim to shock or blame parents. Parents need to be involved in the development of campaigns (not asked to comment on them after they have been developed, as often happens). It may be more helpful to talk about challenge when describing safe play, rather the risk, as risk is usually construed as the probability of harm.

11 What more should be done to enable children and young people to play safely and explore the outside world?

Comments:

Many organisations now offer parenting advice and courses. Where these are not stigmatising they can have considerable success in reducing risk factors and enhancing protective factors for a wide range of behaviours that pose a threat to children's safety and health. These organisations should be encouraged to include a balanced perspective on the different risks faced by children and young people, including the risk from accidents, and how to address children's need for challenge while helping them to keep themselves safe.

Teacher training needs to include more about children's physical, social and emotional development as well as their cognitive development. If teachers were more able to understand how children learn about risk and keeping safe they would be more confident at providing opportunities for challenging play and activity through school. They would also be more able to choose appropriate resources for teaching and learning with respect to safety topics such as road safety, bullying and violence prevention.

12 Are children and young people taught enough in school about how to manage risks and stay safe?

Yes

No

Not Sure

Comments:

Practice varies widely. Some authorities focus on narrow topic based approaches such as water safety, road safety or 'stranger danger' and do not address the transferable aspects of safety and risk education. Others do adopt a more holistic approach. The inclusion of risk as a key concept in the 2008 curriculum for key stages 3 and 4 is a promising step forward. However PSHE remains non statutory and while teachers are largely untrained in this area, there will be little progress. Research by the Health and Safety Laboratory revealed that teachers do not have a good understanding of risk and this needs to be addressed if teachers are going to be able to help children to learn what risk means in their lives, both positive and negative.

Some aspects of the curriculum could be extended to include more about safety and risk education. For example the current standard for learning to swim is 25 yards by Key Stage 3. **RoSPA** and some other organisations think this is inadequate, giving children a false sense of their ability to swim and with insufficient knowledge and skills about personal survival and rescue. **RoSPA** would like to see improved water safety education form part of the inspection

and assessment process in schools, to help reduce accidents in the water.

The PSHE Association has commissioned a review of the effectiveness of safety education, in its broadest sense, which will be made available on its website but safety is an important issue for all teachers and the findings should be more widely disseminated.

Teachers can currently achieve PSHE certification in three areas: sex and relationships education, drug education and social and emotional well being. **RoSPA** believes that a fourth certificate in safety education should be introduced to enable more teachers to specialise in this crucial aspect of PSHE. This certificate should be available to other practitioners in this area who work with schools to promote safety, including road safety officers.

In addition the National Healthy Schools Programme has a very narrow view of safety, which is included only as part of PSHE, separating it from approaches to tackle obesity, for example. The self evaluation approach encourages the development of a narrow view by focussing on road safety to the virtual exclusion of all other aspects of injury prevention.

13 Is teaching safety education in Personal, Social and Health Education a good way to increase children and young people's resilience to harm? Are there other ways we could do this?

Yes

No

Not Sure

Comments: [But please also see my comments above about the need for teacher training in this area].

It is appropriate to include safety within PSHE as well as in subject areas where safety is a crucial element such as PE, Design and Technology and Science. However there needs to be better co-ordination between the approaches adopted in these subjects and PSHE. There should be an increasing development of a language of risk which is shared across all subjects and which will ultimately be used in the workplace and in training for novice drivers Risk should be a key concept in all key stages, not just in Key Stage 3 and 4.

There should also be an increasing recognition of the important role played by the informal youth sector. Local authority and other youth services, sports and play organisations have a lot to contribute because of their focus on broader aspects of young people's development but also because of the wider opportunities they offer for children to experience challenge and take risks in a controlled environment. Engagement with adults in the community is a protective factor for young people with respect to a wide range of harmful behaviours. Those working in the informal sector are rarely recognised for the

important contribution they make as adults whom young people trust, respect and aspire to emulate. For example, **RoSPA** has a wide network of adults who offer advanced driving skills training, through Roadar, all of whom could be trained to work specifically with young people.

14 How can e-safety be promoted to all professionals who are responsible for children's safety?

Comments: See my comments above about teacher training and also below about bullying which occurs outside school.

15 What information would parents welcome about risks of harm faced by their children and how to manage them? What areas mentioned here would parents like more specific information about?

Comments: we have not consulted parents for this response and so are unable to give a well informed response.

16 What more could be done to help Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs) to make a difference?

Comments:

Chapter 4 – Protecting vulnerable children and young people

17 How could training and development for social workers be improved?

Comments:

18 Would a national safeguarding awards scheme help to raise the profile of work to improve children's safety?

Yes

No

Not Sure

Comments:

19 Will the beacon council scheme help to promote learning from good local practice?

Yes

No

Not Sure

Comments:

20 How can we tackle inequalities in prevention of accidents? What role could national or local organisations play?

Comments:

We need more research into the mediating factors between poverty and accidents. Do disadvantaged communities lack knowledge and understanding of safety, especially if they are newly arrived in this country? Do they lack the financial resources to buy safety equipment that would help to reduce the harm from accidents in the home? Are the environments in which they live inherently unsafe? Does the stress of living with debt contribute to a lack of watchfulness? Until we know more about these factors we are less able to design appropriate interventions to help and support people to keep themselves and their families safe. National bodies such as **RoSPA** are well placed to consult with other organisations and with parents and young people to find out their views and relate these views to published evidence of what works in different circumstances, but need resources to carry this out in a systematic way.

21 What problems do professional face in trying to address the needs of both the adults and children in the family?

Comments:

I have highlighted the need for better training for teachers with respect to helping children to learn about keeping safe wherever they are. I have also highlighted the importance of community wide approaches that do not appear to blame children or parents for accidents. Safety is an important public health issue which has been neglected and allowed to become fragmented into silos, with no one government depart taking an overview. One difficulty faced by professionals I lack of reliable accident data to identify the size of the problem, or to help establish what is changing when policies are introduced. Funding for this, which formerly came from DTI has ended and the most recent data for home and leisure accident statistics (HASS and LASS) are now 5 years out of date. **RoSPA** has recently initiated research project to try to re-establish data collection in these two important areas. Government support for this initiative would be welcome.

Professionals also need sustainable funding to enable them to develop local approaches which tackle safety across a community, not in isolated settings or simply targeting the most responsive groups.

22 Do some parents need help to access support available to them?

Yes

No

Not Sure

Comments:

But we need to find ways to engage with these families and find out what support they think they need.

23 How can local areas ensure that children's and adults' services work collaboratively to safeguard and promote the well-being of children and young people affected by substance misuse, domestic violence or mental illness problems within their families?

Comments: Inevitably, Every Child Matters can appear to fragment services aimed at families by focussing on children. The JAR and LAA also need to focus on family oriented approaches to staying safe in the broadest sense.

24 What is the best way to reach parents who might need help with problems that are affecting their children's welfare? Would national or local communications help?

Comments:

Local and national communications should be co-ordinated to work together. Smaller community based organisations and faith groups provide a potential forum for discussion of these issues.

25 Whose responsibility should it be to address bullying that happens outside school? How could local agencies work together to address this problem?

Comments:

When we asked children and young people about this they expressed the view that it was up to them to solve these kinds of problems. In particular secondary school pupils felt it was 'childish' to report every incident of bullying to teachers, especially if it happened out of school. They were also unlikely to tell parents as parents would 'make things worse' or 'tell us to tell the teacher'. One child described this as a 'cycle of uselessness' on the part of adults. Secondary school pupils were most likely to suggest that other peers or 'bigger', older friends or cousins would be most able to help.

Schools have done a lot to address bullying within school – and the young people we consulted knew bullying was not accepted in their schools. Schools, especially secondary schools, need to do more to extend this sense of unacceptability outside school.

One young person told us that 'you would have to put up with it [bullying] at work, so you have to learn sometime'. Possible partners in this effort, therefore, are the Trades Unions, organisations who offer and support young people on work experience and work placement, as well as statutory services such as GPs and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services. The informal youth sector also has much to offer here, where adults have a focus on young people's development.

26 What role could LSCBs play in tackling gun and knife crime? Are there examples of good local or international practice which could be considered in more detail?

Comments:

Chapter 5 – Responding when children and young people have been harmed

27 How can we make sure children have somewhere to turn to if they are being harmed?

Comments:

28 a) Does the Government need to communicate with the public to improve people's ability to identify and know how to act on concerns about children's safety?

x Yes

No

Not Sure

Comments:

28 b) What effect would this have on local services, such as children's social care and the police?

Comments:

29 How can we protect children crossing our borders from harm? How can immigration officers work best with others in their local area?

Comments:

30 Would professionals working with children and young people welcome clear information about cross-border issues to help with potential concerns?

Yes

No

Not Sure

Comments:

Thank you for taking the time to let us have your views. We do not intend to acknowledge individual responses unless you place an 'X' in the box below.

Please acknowledge this reply Yes

Here at the Department for Children, Schools and Families we carry out our research on many different topics and consultations. As your views are valuable to us, would it be alright if we were to contact you again from time to time either for research or to send through consultation documents?

Yes No

All UK national public consultations are required to conform to the following standards:

1. Consult widely throughout the process, allowing a minimum of 12 weeks for written consultation at least once during the development of the policy.
2. Be clear about what your proposals are, who may be affected, what questions are being asked and the timescale for responses.
3. Ensure that your consultation is clear, concise and widely accessible.
4. Give feedback regarding the responses received and how the consultation process influenced the policy.
5. Monitor your department's effectiveness at consultation, including through the use of a designated consultation co-ordinator.
6. Ensure your consultation follows better regulation best practice, including carrying out a Regulatory Impact Assessment if appropriate.

Further information on the Code of Practice can be accessed through the Cabinet Office Website: <http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/regulation/consultation-guidance/content/introduction/index.asp>

Thank you for taking time to respond to this consultation.

Completed questionnaires and other responses should be sent to the address shown below by 31 October 2007

Send by post to:

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Castle View House
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Runcorn
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CW8 4LZ

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