## Procedures for reporting harms associated with STASH (Sexually Transmitted infections And Sexual Health): an NIHR-funded trial of a schools-based peer supporter intervention

The following document outlines the procedures for reporting to the Trial Steering Committee any occurrences of harm to participants in the course of the STASH trial. It defines the terms used, outlines the extent to which such occurrences are expected within the trial period, and details procedures for documenting and reporting these. The document has been developed in line with West Lothian Schools Child Protection Procedures – in collaboration with West Lothian Council Child Protection – and in line with National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) reporting procedures. This document should be read alongside ‘STASH Procedures: Reporting of child protection concerns in SCHOOLS’, which details procedures for reporting and recording sensitive disclosures and potential child protection issues which occur in participating schools in the course of the trial.

**Acronyms and terminology**

‘Designated member of staff for Child Protection (DMS)’: Member(s) of school staff with specific responsibility for Child Protection

‘ICT’: information and communications technology

‘NIHR’: National Institute for Health Research (study funder)

‘Peer Supporters’: S4 students who have completed two-day training in STASH and have agreed to take on a role of passing on positive sexual health messages to S4 peers (see STASH Protocol)

‘STASH contact teacher’: teacher agreed as contact point between school and STASH Research Team, and as contact for Peer Supporters for the duration of STASH trial

‘STASH Research Team’: Prof Laurence Moore (Principal Investigator), Dr Kirstin Mitchell (Co-Principal Investigator), Dr Carrie Purcell (Researcher), Mr Ross Forsyth (Project Manager)

‘Trial participants’: Any members of S4 in the trial school

‘TSC’: STASH Trial Steering Committee

**1. Safety reporting definitions**

*1.1 Untoward incidents and Harms in STASH*

An ‘untoward incident’ is a negative event which is unintended or unplanned and may occur as a direct result of, or unrelated to, the STASH trial. Such events may include: social exclusion/isolation of participants by peers; inappropriate/inaccurate online posts by Peer Supporters; disrespectful behaviour towards others; breaches of private/personal information by peers; online bulling or sending of sexual/compromising images without consent or for the purposes of humiliation. An untoward incident may or may not cause harm.

‘Harm’ relates to emotional, physical and psychological harm including sexual assault

*1.2 Sensitive disclosures and potential child protection issues*

Relevant child protection issues which may be disclosed in the course of the STASH trial include: non-consensual sexual activity; child sexual exploitation; suicidal ideation; self-harm/injury; neglect or abuse. See ‘STASH Procedures: Reporting of child protection concerns in SCHOOLS’ for full details of relevant procedures relating to disclosure of sensitive information to a peer supporter or member of the STASH team.

**2. Expectations within the STASH trial**

Untoward incidents (as defined above) occur in day-to-day school life, and may occur during the trial period, irrespective of the STASH trial. In specific relation to STASH, it is important to note that some flippancy is to be expected in young people’s online interactions. Untoward incidents which do not result in harm will be captured in the process evaluation of STASH (see STASH Protocol). Procedures for reporting sensitive disclosures and potential child protection (safeguarding) issues are detailed in ‘STASH Procedures: Reporting of child protection concerns in SCHOOLS’.

This guidance is concerned only with the recording and reporting of untoward incidents in the trial period which result in harm. Harms occurring as a *direct result* of STASH are unlikely. Harm unrelated to STASH is also unlikely during the short trial period.

**3. Procedures in place to minimise potential for ‘untoward’ incidents and harms**

The STASH Research Team will employ strategies to minimise the likelihood of harms occurring. Peer Supporters will be required at training to sign up to a code of conduct (the STASH Charter). Procedures for dealing with disrespectful/aggressive online behaviour will follow the ICT code of conduct and discipline code of participating schools. Social media use will be confined to private (‘secret’ ie. non-visible, invite-only) Facebook groups, of which STASH Trainers will be a member. Trainers will conduct monitoring ‘spot checks’, and Peer Supporters will also be encouraged to report any untoward incidents promptly to the Trainer and/or STASH Contact Teacher. Students will also have the option to privately message the Trainer as required. The Trainer should pass on any concerns to the Contact Teacher without delay.

All members of the Research Team and the trainers working in schools have PVG clearance/Enhanced Disclosure Scotland certification, which allows them to work with young people under 16.

**4.** **Procedures for reporting and documenting harms**

The following sets out reporting procedures at each point of interaction in the STASH trial. These relate to the involvement of the STASH Research Team, STASH Trainers, STASH Contact Teacher/DMS, Peer Supporters, and the whole S4 year group.

While there are no likely harms in relation to the trial, the following mechanisms are in place through which any unexpected harms will be identified and reported, regardless of whether they result from the STASH trial, or are concurrent. Schools have policies in place to deal with behaviours that constitute minor untoward incidents, and so these are not addressed here.

*4.1 Identification of possible harm in relation to participants (all S4s including Peer Supporters)*

In the course of STASH Year 1 (2016) preparatory work, we sought to identify and articulate potential untoward incidents via a number of avenues. These have included: consultation sessions with young people; a young peoples’ advisory group; interviews and friendship group discussions with participants from the pilot school; interviews with key school staff (including the STASH Contact Teacher school and DMS for Child Protection); and preparatory discussions with West Lothian Education and Child Protection Officers, and a range of experts in schools-based interventions and child protection.

Within the school setting, reporting of potential harms will follow school procedures, which require immediate reporting of sensitive disclosures and child protection concerns (see Appendix 1 for example from one school). These procedures are in turn steered by national guidance and local (West Lothian Local Authority) protocols on child protection and underage sexual activity (eg. 2010 National Guidance on Underage Sexual Activity – see Appendix 2).

The STASH Contact Teacher/DMS and those delivering the intervention (STASH Trainers and Peer Supporters) will be asked to notify the Research Team within five working days if any harm occurs to a member of staff or student, as a direct result of taking part in the STASH trial. In such a case, a trial-specific harm report form will be used to record information on the event (see Appendix 3).

Members of the Research Team at the University of Glasgow will be required to document any harms reported to them during trial data collection. All documented harms will be discussed with the Principal Investigators (LM/KM) to assess severity and causality. Causality will be determined according to the criteria in Table 1. In the case of discrepant views on causality the event will be handled at the highest event categorisation.

*Table 1. Causal relationship between untoward incident resulting in harm and STASH trial*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Relationship** | **Description** |
| **Unrelated** | There is no evidence of any causal relationship with the trial |
| **Unlikely** | There is little evidence to suggest there is a casual relationship (e.g. the event did not occur within a reasonable time after intervention) with the trial. There is another reasonable explanation for the event (e.g. known behavioral issues). |
| **Possible** | There is some evidence to suggest a causal relationship with the trial (e.g. because the event occurs within a reasonable time after intervention). However, the influence of other factors may have contributed to the event (e.g. known behavioral issues). |
| **Probable** | There is evidence to suggest a causal relationship and the influence of other factors is unlikely. |
| **Definite** | There is clear evidence to suggest a causal relationship and other possible contributing factors can be ruled out. |
| **Not assessable** | There is insufficient or incomplete evidence to make a judgement of the causal relationship. |

All reported harms, for which causality is deemed ‘possible’ and above, will be reported in writing to the STASH TSC and the NIHR within 15 days of the Research Team receiving the initial report. Reporting should be made via the form in appendix 3 The threshold for informing the TSC is set at low. The chair will circulate with rest of group if necessary. If the chair is away, the PI should inform the designated representative (DG).

A harm which is deemed ‘unrelated’ or ‘unlikely to be related’ to the trial will be reported to the TSC at the next scheduled meeting. Regardless of attribution, harms will be reported immediately to the STASH Contact Teacher and handled via school procedures (see Appendix 1 and ‘STASH Procedures: Reporting of child protection concerns in SCHOOLS’).

*4.2 Reporting of sensitive disclosures and potential child protection (safeguarding) issues to Peer Supporters during STASH trial*

Appropriate responses to sensitive disclosures and procedures for reporting potential child protection issues are explained – and their importance emphasised – during the two-day Peer Supporter training. In particular, Peer Supporters will be advised on how to respond to sensitive information shared by peers (including respecting privacy), and when to share these with the STASH Contact Teacher/DMS.

Peer Supporters are given guidance on how to identify sensitive disclosures and potential CP issues, and when and how to report these incidents to the Trainer or Contact Teacher/DMS. The expectation is made clear to young people acting as Peer Supporters that any disclosures about which they feel worried or uncomfortable should be reported without delay to the Contact Teacher/DMS. Schools have in place procedures for handling disclosures relating to child protection (see Appendix 1), which should then be followed as normal. Peer Supporters are advised that they may also contact the STASH trainer via Facebook, if they wish (see below).

It is possible that students might make other disclosures to Peer Supporters in the trial period which do not constitute a child protection issue, but which are nonetheless experienced as concerning by either party. During training, Peer Supporters are advised to act only within their comfort level, and are not to provide support beyond what they would normally offer to a friend. We recognise that the capacity of minors to make appropriate decisions around their own safety is a contested issue. STASH Peer Supporters will be strongly encouraged to refer other students to appropriate sources of adult help, and are provided in their training with detailed guidance on when to refer and to whom (usually the Contact Teacher/DMS). These will be established at the initial Peer Supporter training and maintained throughout the trial, via the regular follow-up sessions led by STASH Trainers.

*4.3 Disclosures of harm to Research Team and/or STASH trainers*

The role of the Research Team and STASH trainers includes: having awareness of relevant child protection/safeguarding procedures; recognising indicators of abuse; recording and passing on relevant information without delay; consultation with an appropriate person. Procedures for referral follow school procedures (see Appendix 1) and relevant national guidance.

In the course of the process evaluation, all S4 participants will also be asked whether they perceived any negative untoward incidents resulting from the trial. The Research Team and STASH Trainers will only break confidentiality where a disclosure during Peer Supporter training or evaluation fieldwork (group discussions, paired interviews) suggests that a young person might be at risk or pose a risk to others (see Appendix 1). We will work closely with the school (via the Contact Teacher) to ensure that any relevant information is shared.

*4.4 Referral for sexual health advice*

The Research Team will also work with local young people’s sexual health services, school nurses/sexual health drop-in services, and youth organisations to ensure appropriate referral for young people requesting help with personal issues related to their sexual health. Every member of the Research Team will be provided with relevant contact details for local services, which they can provide to students as appropriate. Local sexual health services will be invited to attend Peer Supporter training and/or follow-up sessions, in order to consolidate pathways to support.

**Appendix 1.**

**AA (PILOT SCHOOL) CHILD PROTECTION PROCEDURES**

All members of staff have the responsibility to follow Edinburgh and Lothians Inter-Agency Child Protection Procedures. Copies of the procedures are held in the school office.

The designated members of staff for Child Protection are:

**\*LIST OF TEACHERS WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR CHILD PROTECTION\***

Action procedures for managing a disclosure are in the Child Protection Policy and E&L Inter-Agency Procedures.

Remember:

When faced with a disclosure or concern –

Do not guarantee confidentiality

Be receptive and reassuring

A signed, hand-written record of concerns noting the date and time when the matter was passed to DMS

Share your concern with the DMS on the same day

Where DMS is unavailable, you must not delay, but make a referral immediately to one of the Core Agencies:

**\*List core agencies and contact details\***

**Appendix 2.**

The two most relevant documents relating to schools-based policy on the above issues are:

1. GIRFEC <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/People/Young-People/gettingitright/wellbeing> (sets out roles and responsibilities, information sharing, risk assessment and responding to child protection concerns) and

2. NATIONAL GUIDANCE: Under-age Sexual Activity: Meeting the Needs of Children and Young People and Identifying Child Protection Concerns (2010) <http://www.gov.scot/resource/doc/333495/0108880.pdf> (to be read alongside GIRFEC)

While specific protocols are developed locally, the latter document outlines examples of potential indicators of harm / circumstances in which information should be shared amongst agencies with responsibility for child protection (see below). All adults involved in STASH will operate with these guidelines in mind.

The following section has been reproduced from the national guidance on under-age sexual activity, with permission from The Scottish Government.

*‘Automatic sharing of concerns*

There are certain circumstances in which practitioners should automatically share child protection concerns:

• if the young person is currently 13 or over but sexual activity took place when they were 12 or under;

• if there is evidence or indication that the young person is involved in pornography or prostitution;

• if the 'other person' is in a position of trust in relation to the young person;

• if the young person is perceived to be at immediate risk.

*In these circumstances, the practitioner should:*

• where appropriate, speak with the child and young person prior to passing on the child protection concern – every reasonable effort should be made to seek their agreement;

• share the child protection concern in line with their local child protection procedures, detailing those who are involved, the nature of the concerns etc; and

• if agreement is not reached, the professional should share the child protection concern and inform the child and young person that this will be the course of action.

*If the young person is not at risk of harm:*

*If the practitioner has assessed that the sexual behaviour is consensual teenage sexual activity where there are no concerns of abuse or exploitation, the practitioner should:*

• uphold the confidentiality rights of the young person; and

• provide practical assistance and advice as required. Practitioners not qualified to provide this should signpost young people to the appropriate local services (e.g. sexual health services).

*If the practitioner has assessed that the sexual behaviour is not abusive or exploitative, but that there remain concerns about the young person's behaviour e.g. their ability to assess risk, their use of drugs/alcohol, the environment in which they seek sexual contacts etc, then the practitioner should:*

• uphold the confidentiality rights of the young person; and

• provide practical assistance and advice as required within their own agency or, with their permission, refer them to the appropriate clinical or support services, including forensic or sexual health services.

*In both these scenarios, a single-agency decision-making process is normally appropriate.*

*If there are concerns that the young person might be at risk of harm:*

*If the practitioner is concerned that the young person's behaviour, or the nature of the sexual behaviour and/or relationship, could indicate that the young person is at risk of harm, the practitioner should:*

• seek guidance from a line-manager in accordance with their agency's guidelines and decide if further action is required;

• inform the young person about the need speak to other practitioners, where required, and seek their consent if possible;

• share appropriate information with other practitioners about the young person;

• if required, seek advice from other services and agencies to assist in this decision-making; and

• share information with the police if there are concerns about the young person's sexual partner.’

**Appendix 3**

**Appendix 3**

**STASH TRIAL**

**REPORT TO RESEARCH TEAM OF SERIOUS NEGATIVE EVENTS RESULTING IN SIGNIFICANT EMOTIONAL AND/OR PSYCHOLOGICAL HARM TO ONE OR MORE INDIVIDUALS**

STASH Contact Teachers and Trainers are asked to contact the Research Team within five working days if they become aware of any sensitive disclosure and/or potential child protection issue occurs, as a direct result of the STASH study. Young people acting as peer supporters are asked to pass on any sensitive disclosure and/or potential child protection issue to DMS or Trainers for reporting as soon as possible.

**1. Details of person making report**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ***Name:*** |  |
| Role relating to STASH: |  |
| Telephone: |  |
| Email: |  |

**2. Circumstances of event**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Date on which untoward incident/ harm occurred: |  |
| Location: |  |
| Type of incident (eg. cyberbullying, unlawful activity): |  |
| Please describe the circumstances of the event and actions taken: |  |

**3. Declaration**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Signature of reporting person: |  |
| Print name: |  |
| Date of submission to Research Team: |  |

***FOR STASH Research Team Use Only***

**4. Acknowledgement of receipt by main Research Team**

The Research Team acknowledges receipt of the above report.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Signed: |  |
| Print name: |  |
| Position on Research Team: |  |
| Date: |  |
| Causality judgment:  Unrelated; unlikely; possible; probable; definite; not assessable |  |
| To be forwarded to TSC? (Yes/No) If YES, date forwarded. |  |

*If causality is deemed possible between serious negative event and STASH trial, the TSC chair should be informed within 15 days. The threshold for informing the TSC is set at low. The chair will circulate with rest of group if necessary. If the chair is away, the PI should inform the designated representative (DG).*

*Signed original to be retained by STASH Research Team.*

**5. Acknowledgement of receipt by STASH Trial Steering Committee**

The TSC acknowledges receipt of the above report

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Signed: |  |
| Print name: |  |
| Position on Research Team: |  |
| Date: |  |