

CASE STUDY

Adopting technology enhanced systems to deliver effective safeguarding audits

A Virtual College Case Study

Support Services
for Education





“ It is now easy to track progress, police completions and challenge responses so that we can focus on support and continuous improvement. ”

The **background**

Set up as a result of the 2004 Children Act, Safeguarding Children Boards are regulated by that law.

The Somerset Safeguarding Children Board (SSCB) is the statutory, multi-agency partnership with responsibility for coordinating, monitoring and challenging all activity relating to safeguarding children and young people living in Somerset. It is made up of a number of local statutory partner agencies including the Council, the police and NHS Foundation Trusts.

The **challenge**

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 requires governing bodies of maintained schools and FE colleges to make arrangements to ensure that their functions are carried out with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

This statutory guidance requires that they should carry out an annual review of their safeguarding practice and demonstrate how the duties set out in the guidance have been discharged. This audit form enables schools and FE colleges to undertake a thorough review of safeguarding procedures and aims to:

- Support education providers to consider their safeguarding procedures in line with Early Years Foundation Stage, Independent and Ofsted inspections.
- To provide a set base line of expectation across the county of safeguarding procedures so that children remain safe in education in the various provisions they may access throughout their different stages of education.

Prior to 2016, a paper-based system was used for the Section 175 audit.

Somerset County Council Support Services for Education Safeguarding Advisor, Jane Weatherill, commented: " There were 3 different variants of the paper-based audit and they were mainly tick box documents that did not provide enough detail or challenge the respondent sufficiently.

"Responses were made in different formats and via various methods, including post and email, so it was difficult to generate meaningful reports and a great deal of time was spent chasing people for their completed audits."

The **solution**

In February 2016, the previous paper based system was withdrawn by Somerset SCB in favour of using Enable Audit, a software system developed by Virtual College.

This online auditing tool is designed to simplify the process of any audit - making the whole system quicker, easier to manage, administrate and report on.

The requirements of a Section 175 audit can vary significantly from region to region so Jane created her own specific questions using the tool's visual Audit Editor.

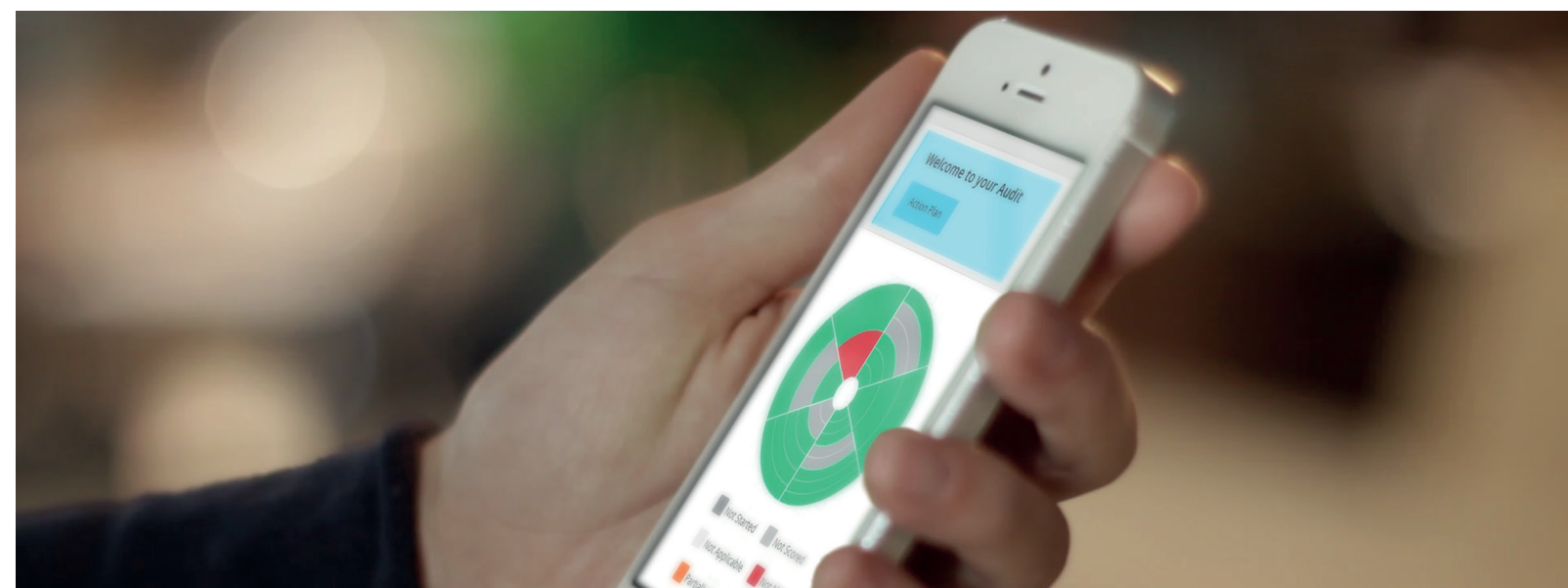
This audit questions were then sent out to over 1000 educational providers that cater for children and young people aged 0-18 years old.

In junior schools the safeguarding lead is usually the head and in secondary and colleges, it is normally a member of their senior leadership teams.

In response to the questions, multiple users can logon and upload information, evidence and action points that are recorded and integrated instantly into the centralised audit tool.

The audit is a working document and can be filled in, saved and returned to for further work before submitting.

The audits go into an annual report which is shared with the SCB and becomes a live document.



The results

Enable Audit's central storage tool keeps all of the evidence in one place. As well as saving organisations' time, this can be of vital importance when members of staff change. It uses a traffic light (red, amber, green) scoring system to identify progress and areas for priority action.

At the click of a button, detailed and comparative reports can be generated so progress and areas for improvement can be analysed easily.

Introducing Enable Audit has produced great Section 175 completion rates of 98% within Somerset SCB– a major improvement on the previous paper-based system.

Jane commented: "Some of the respondents in the schools and colleges were initially uneasy about using the technology but they quickly got to grips with it and we have had nothing but positive feedback since. Users like the flexibility of being able to keep coming back to it and the ability to assign actions for others to complete.

"From my perspective, the 'RAG' rating system creates a very visible means of highlighting areas of concern and this year we will be adding text boxes to the audit to allow for comments.

"It is now easy to track progress, police completions and challenge responses so that we can focus on support and continuous improvement.

"As the information is provided in a consistent format, it is much easier to analyse and create meaningful reports."



Phone
01943 885085



Email
info@safeguardingchildren.co.uk



Web
www.safeguardingchildren.co.uk

About Virtual College

Since 2006, we have provided training to every NHS Trust and now work with over 60 local safeguarding boards. Over this period, we have donated more than £200,000 to healthcare and safeguarding charities.

Virtual College has over 2.7 million online learners and was voted 'Learning Technologies Supplier of the Year 2016-2017'.

Virtual College Ltd

Marsel House, Stephenson's Way
Ilkley, West Yorkshire
LS29 8DD, England