Support
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Learn

Schools' Safeguarding Handbook

2026/2027

Version 12, September 2026

This resource is only for use by settings with a safeguarding SLA and should not be placed online or shared without the express permission of SIL.

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SECTION 1

Guidance for all staff, volunteers and visitors

Schools' Safeguarding Charter

We are committed to:

- √ Always acting in the best interests of the child, ensuring their views and wishes are heard and acted upon.
- √ Safeguarding children and promoting their welfare. This is a shared responsibility within our school and together with all partner agencies.
- √ Working with partner agencies to safeguard children by adhering to Local Safeguarding Children Partnership policies and procedures and National Guidance, particularly the LSCP responding to needs framework / levels of need guidance. We will contribute to effective holistic assessments of the child and family to ensure better outcomes for children.
- √ Working in partnership with other agencies to provide Family Help in keeping with the statutory Guidance in '**Keeping Children Safe in Education**' (DfE) and '**Working Together to Safeguard Children**' (DfE). Schools are well placed to promote Family Help and undertake Family Help Assessments with other agencies before children's needs escalate to a point where a statutory referral to Children's Services is required.
- √ Providing effective induction of all staff and volunteers, and regular on-going training to ensure all adults can recognise signs and indicators of abuse and harm. Adults working with children are always expected to act in the best interests of the child and understand that, if necessary, anyone can make a referral to Children's Services.
- √ Ensuring that safer recruitment practices are adhered to and that we have well understood safeguarding policies and procedures. Our code of conduct for adults will promote safer working practices and a culture of vigilance and challenge.
- √ Challenging ourselves and multi-agency partners to ensure actions to improve outcomes for children are completed in a timely way; always escalating our concerns when a child's needs remain unmet following local escalation procedures.
- √ Quality assuring our practices and specifically completing any actions arising from the Local Safeguarding Children Partnership's 175 safeguarding audit. Governors and school leaders will quality assure all safeguarding practices. The headteacher should provide support and oversight of the Designated Safeguarding Lead and safeguarding team through effective supervision reviewing their decisions, actions and record keeping.
- √ Implementing any learning arising from Local and National serious case reviews and other reviews, for example the need to listen and respond to the views and wishes of children, especially when assessing their needs and providing on-going support.
- √ Providing children with a curriculum which enables them to learn about risk and how to keep themselves safe and maintain happy and healthy relationships. We will provide a listening culture where children have identified adults who they can discuss their concerns with.

My Safeguarding Pledge©

My Safeguarding Pledge©

To demonstrate my commitment to safeguarding children I pledge to:

- demonstrate professional curiosity and always ensure that children are visible, their voices heard and their needs, views and wishes addressed
- work in partnership with other agencies, always acting in the best interests of children
- act without delay to protect children from harm and abuse
- provide early help before children's needs escalate further
- apply the local 'levels of need guidance' to assess and re-evaluate children's needs
- share information promptly to support a collective and holistic assessment of children's needs
- strengthen relationships with families, supporting them to build resilience by adopting a solution focused approach
- attend all multi-agency meetings to ensure collective responsibility for achieving positive outcomes for children in a timely way
- ensure agencies challenge each other so that actions are taken promptly, avoiding professional drift
- follow local multi-agency procedures to escalate concerns until there is an appropriate resolution
- participate in regular and effective supervision with my peers so that there is strong oversight of decisions made and actions taken
- meet all mandatory training requirements, regularly updating my professional knowledge whilst applying any learning to my practice and cascading to others

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Our Safeguarding Offer

The Safeguarding Service Level Agreement includes the following key services:

- Training for those New to the Role of Designated Safeguarding Lead
- Refresher training for Designated Safeguarding Leads (including DSL Refresher twilight sessions throughout the year and the provision of regular DSL network sessions)
- Annual safeguarding briefings for Headteachers
- Support and advice from members of the team through telephone consultations, emails or visits in response to critical incidents or other safeguarding concerns
- A comprehensive and regularly updated Schools' Safeguarding Handbook which includes key model policies, resources and guidance
- Regular newsletters and other e-briefings

Many Headteachers, school leaders and governors welcome having independent safeguarding advice at a difficult time. This can include when managing a safeguarding complaint, allegation against a member of staff or a disagreement with another agency.

In addition, there are further services offered to schools at an additional cost:

1. Safeguarding Audit / Health Check

We offer a comprehensive one day review which focusses on examining the school's evidence of how it meets the key statutory requirements in '**Keeping Children Safe in Education**' and also Ofsted expectations.

2. Focused Safeguarding Visit

A half-day on-site visit, exploring a pre-agreed focused area. Themes could include:

- Safeguarding for vulnerable cohorts e.g. SEND, children with a social worker, etc…
- Ofsted inspection preparation
- A safeguarding learning walk / review of site security and safety
- A review of record keeping
- Effectiveness of safeguarding training

3. Bespoke services or support, available to all schools on-site:

- An examination of your single central record and evidence of safer recruitment practices
- Bespoke on-site training, for example, whole staff safeguarding training or in house DSL or Safer Recruitment training

4. Additional training opportunities including courses such as:

- Managing allegations against staff and volunteers
- Managing safer recruitment checks for Business Managers and Admin Officers
- Safer Recruitment Training and Refresher Training for school leaders and Governors
- Responding to problematic or harmful sexualised behaviours

You can contact the team using the email address safeguarding@sil-ltd.co.uk

We regularly share information, guidance and best practice via our Twitter account. You can follow us using the handle:

@SILsafeguarding

SIL Safeguarding

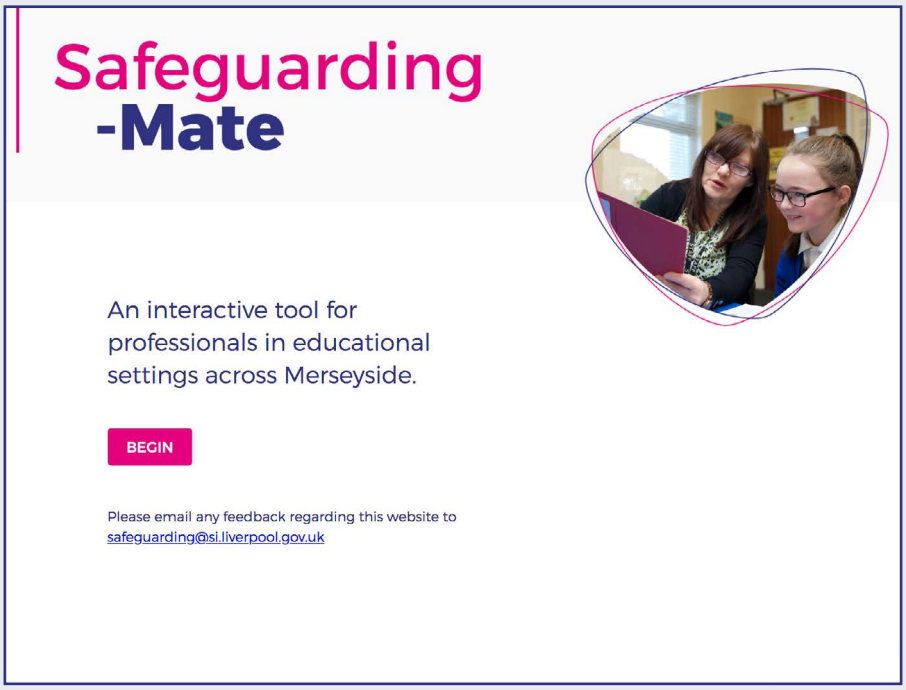
Safeguarding-Mate

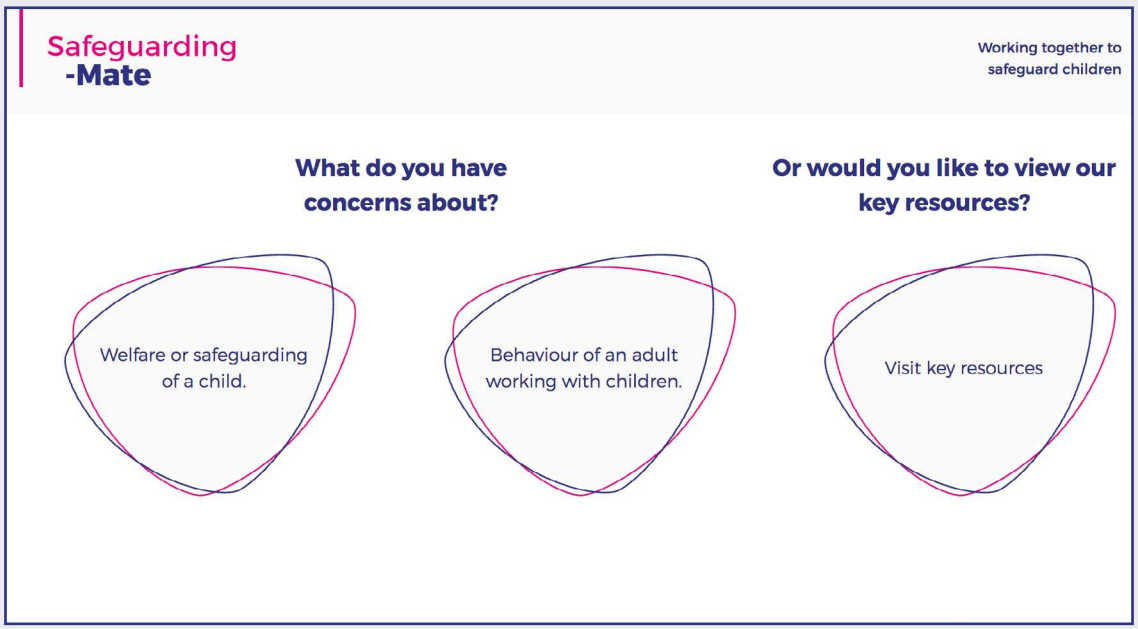
Safeguarding-Mate is an online, interactive tool for educational professionals in settings across Merseyside. It aims to guide and support colleagues' decision making when they are considering any welfare concerns about a child or if they feel an adult working in their setting has acted inappropriately. Safeguarding-Mate also provides a useful resource section to signpost settings to other key Local and National Guidance.

Safeguarding-Mate compliments your safeguarding training and your setting's own child protection policies and procedures. It aims to reinforce key practice expectations that form part of local safeguarding partners' procedures.

Safeguarding-Mate will guide your thinking but it does not replace the need to seek advice from other professionals, when required.

It can be accessed using the following link: www.sil-ltd.co.uk/safeguarding-mate





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Exemplar Safeguarding Advice for Visitors

The following guidance should be personalised by the school and given to all visitors:

Our school is committed to safeguarding children and promoting children's welfare and expects all staff, governors, volunteers and visitors to share this commitment and maintain a vigilant and safe environment. It is our willingness to work in a safe manner and challenge inappropriate behaviour that underpins this commitment. By signing in and out of the visitors' book / e-portal you are agreeing to follow the advice within this leaflet. All visitors must wear the visitor's badge provided by reception. An adult without a badge will be accompanied to the school's reception to confirm they have signed in.

Visitors must be accompanied at all times by a member of the school staff.

Unsupervised visitors: If your visit involves unsupervised contact with young people you will be asked to show the photographic ID badge provided by your employer and written confirmation that you have an Enhanced DBS Certificate including a Barred List Check. You may be required by the school to present your Enhanced DBS Certificate. We will not make a copy of your certificate. We will simply note the level of the check undertaken. You will also need to read and understand the school's Code of Conduct for Adults and Part 1 of the DfE's Guidance, '**Keeping Children Safe in Education**'. The school's Child Protection Policy is available on the school's website.

If you have ANY concerns about a child's welfare or wellbeing or have a concern about the behaviour of any adult within the school towards a child:

- Discuss your concerns **without delay** with the Designated Safeguarding Lead or the Headteacher or a member of the safeguarding team
- Remember it is important to share your concerns even if you are unsure
- Anyone (in emergencies or if they need to) can make a referral directly to Children's Services
- The Local Authority Designated Officer (L.A.D.O.) for managing allegations against staff and volunteers can be contacted via Children's Services
- The school office can provide you with a copy of the school's procedures for managing allegations against staff and volunteers

If a child makes a disclosure to you:

- Do not investigate but report them immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead, Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead or another member of the senior staff at the school
- Avoid being shocked or embarrassed
- Listen to the child without interrupting them
- Do not promise to keep a secret
- Do not ask the child any leading questions
- Reassure them that 'it is not their fault and they have done the right thing to tell you'
- Immediately following the disclosure report your concerns to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (see above) and write down what the child said using the child's own words and phrases. Sign and date this document and hand it to the Designated Safeguarding Lead
- Consider how best to manage your own feelings
- Following reporting your concerns remember that the disclosure and the child's identity should remain confidential

The school can provide additional National Guidance in respect of safer working practices for all adults working with young people, including advice regarding 'on-line safety'.

Remember:

- Provide a positive role model to young people
- Dress appropriately, ensuring your clothing is not likely to be viewed as offensive or revealing
- Treat all members of the school's community with respect and tolerance
- Work with children so that you are visible by a member of the school staff
- Respect a child's privacy and dignity
- Always be able to justify any physical contact you have with a young person
- Always report any situations that arise that you may feel may give rise to a complaint or misunderstanding in respect of your own actions
- There should be no delay in ringing 999 and requesting fire, police or an ambulance

Never:

- Photograph a child without the school's permission
- Never use your personal mobile phone in areas used by young people
- Ignore inappropriate behaviours towards children either by other children or adults
- Share personal details with a child
- Meet or contact the child out of school including by text, email, Facebook or other social media or give a child a lift home
- Discuss the school, children or adults working within the school on social media
- Make inappropriate comments to a child including racist, homophobic, sexist or sexualised comments
- Give gifts to a young person (unless part of the school's agreed rewards policy or with the agreement of your line manager) or show them preferential treatment

Key staff or governors:
Headteacher:
Designated Safeguarding Lead:
Those trained to deputise for the Designated Safeguarding Lead:
Chair of Governors:
Safeguarding Governor:
Names of First Aiders:

Other Safeguarding Guidance:

In the case of a fire follow the following procedures:

If a child or member of staff needs emergency treatment or first aid:

Checklist for the Mandatory Safeguarding Induction of All Staff and Volunteers

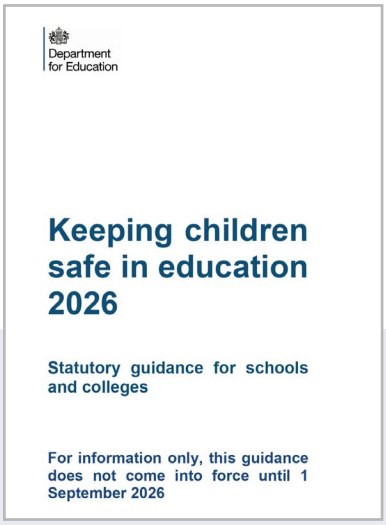
All staff and volunteers should receive an appropriate safeguarding induction and on-going training. The following checklist will support schools to ensure staff and volunteers receive copies of key guidance and are sign-posted to where they can find further guidance.

A copy of this induction checklist should be signed and retained on the individual's staff personnel file.

Checklist for the Mandatory Safeguarding Induction of All Staff & Volunteers	
Name:	
Post:	
I confirm I will ensure I read and understand the following documents Signed:	
Staff and volunteers should receive copies of the following information / guidance:	
	Date received
Name of the Headteacher, Designated Safeguarding Lead, Chair of Governors and Safeguarding Governor	
Names of those trained to deputise for the Designated Safeguarding Lead	
Role of the Designated Safeguarding Lead (Appendix B of '**Keeping Children Safe in Education**')	
DfE Guidance: '**Keeping Children Safe in Education**' Part 1 and Annex A	
School's child protection policy and procedures	
School's managing allegations against staff procedures	
School's whistle-blowing policy	
Safer Recruitment Consortium: **Guidance for safer working practice for professionals working in education settings**	
School's own Code of Conduct or Staff Behaviour Policy	
DfE Guidance: '**What to do if you are worried a child is being abused**'	
The school's safeguarding response to children who go missing from education	
School's behaviour policy	
SIL's Safeguarding Induction Booklet	
Staff and volunteers should know where to find the following information / guidance:	
Additional safeguarding guidance including: child sexual exploitation, criminal exploitation, sexual violence and harassment, female genital mutilation, forced marriage, missing children, faith abuse, fabricated or induced illnesses, gangs, serious violence and extremism and radicalisation.	
School's policies for students including: anti-bulling, behaviour for learning, equality and diversity	
Policies for supporting children including: intimate care, positive and safe handling, medical needs	
Health care plans for students	
Fire evacuation procedures	
Lock down guidance / procedures	

Date induction completed:	
Signature:	
Date:	
DSL name:	
DSL signature:	
Date:	

Recognising Indicators of Abuse and Neglect



All staff should **read and understand Part 1 and Annex A** of '**Keeping Children Safe in Education**' September 2026.

The guidance defines four types of abuse and neglect:

- Physical
- Emotional
- Sexual
- Neglect

The DfE provide the following guidance:
All school and college staff should be aware that abuse, neglect and safeguarding issues are rarely standalone events that can be covered by one definition or label. In most cases, multiple issues will overlap with one another.

Abuse: a form of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm or by failing to act to prevent harm. Harm can include ill treatment that is not physical as well as the impact of witnessing ill treatment of others. This can be particularly relevant, for example, in relation to the impact on children of all forms of domestic abuse, including where they see, hear or experience its effects. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting by those known to them or, more rarely, by others. Abuse can take place wholly online, or technology may be used to facilitate offline abuse. Children may be abused by an adult or adults or by another child or children. Children may also cause harm to other family members, often referred to as child to parent or care giver abuse.

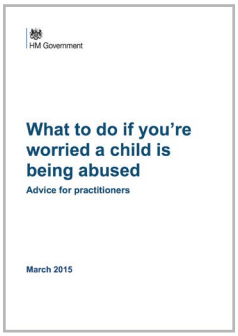
Physical Abuse: form of abuse which may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.

Emotional Abuse: the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond a child's developmental capability as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child from participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyberbullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, although it may occur alone.

Sexual Abuse: involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse. Sexual abuse can take place online, and technology can be used to facilitate offline abuse. Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

Neglect: the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and / or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy, for example, as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to: provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment); protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger; ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers); or ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

It is important to remember that staff and volunteers should discuss any concern about a child's welfare without delay with the school or settings Designated Safeguarding Lead or Deputy or senior member of staff without feeling they need to determine the type of abuse.



The DfE Guidance ***'What to do if you're worried a child is being abused'*** reminds us of the need to be alert to the signs of abuse and neglect and to consider the behaviour of children and parents / carers. It is important that **all staff and volunteers read this guidance in full** and remain focused on the child. Staff and volunteers should receive training to help them become more aware of physical and behavioural indicators or changes in children that might be due to abuse or neglect. It is important to remember that children may be unable or afraid to disclose their concerns.

The NSPCC also provide extensive on-line resources to support staff to recognise abuse and neglect: www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse.

The following are examples of indicators of harm. Importantly you should also consider the specific indicators associated with specific forms of abuse, e.g. female genital mutilation or child sexual exploitation.

The child may:

- Be regularly missing from school
- Drug taking or alcohol abuse
- Experience child-on-child abuse including initiation / hazing type violence and rituals
- Have poor attendance including unexplained absences or punctuality or is often collected late from school
- Lack concentration at school, fall behind with their work or fail to reach developmental milestones
- Ask you if you will keep a secret before offering to tell you something
- Talk about a friend who has a problem
- Have unexplained or untreated injuries
- Have repeated injuries
- Talk of being in pain or discomfort
- Be unwilling to change in front of other children
- Be unwilling to discuss injuries, marks or bruises
- Always cover their arms and legs even in hot weather
- Be fearful of medical help or parents being contacted
- Be afraid of parents or carers and unwilling to go home
- Be fearful of particular adults
- Have sudden behavioural changes including becoming aggressive, irritable, lethargic or withdrawn
- Have low self-esteem, self-harm or feel suicidal

- Display extreme anger or sadness or depression, display aggression or attention seeking behaviour
- Flinch when approached
- Be clingy
- Continually run away or talk about running way
- Be left in unsupervised or in unsafe situations or be involved in risk taking behaviour
- Have sudden changes in weight (loss or gain) or eating disorders
- Scavenge or scrounge food
- Be constantly hungry or tired
- Have poor social relationships or be socially isolated
- Display sudden speech disorders
- Be frequently unclean, inappropriately or inadequately dressed
- Experience being constantly 'put down', insulted, sworn at or humiliated
- Display sexualised behaviour seemingly inappropriate for their age including sexualised behaviour towards others
- Present artwork, play or write displaying sexual themes
- Take on a parental role within the home
- Be concerned for younger siblings without explaining why
- Have unexplained amounts of money
- Talk about terrifying dreams
- Soil or wet themselves or regress to other childhood behaviours including thumb sucking
- Have difficulty sleeping or start wetting the bed
- Begin or revisit 'rocking' behaviour
- Have urinary infections
- Have soreness or bleeding in genital or anal areas or in the throat
- Misuse drugs or alcohol

Staff and volunteers need to be familiar with the different signs of abuse and harm that might indicate specific forms of abuse associated with, as examples:

- Child sexual exploitation
- Criminal exploitation
- Domestic abuse
- Female genital mutilation
- Forced marriage
- Fabricated or induced illnesses
- Faith abuse
- Gender based violence
- Gang activity
- Sexting
- Trafficking

How to Respond if a Child Discloses to You

Receive

- Remain calm, providing a safe place for the child to disclose (away from other children)
- Listen to the child without interrupting them
- Show concern by taking the child seriously, but avoid becoming upset
- Do not show shock or embarrassment, or express anger towards the abuser

Reassure

- Tell them they are not to blame for what has happened
- Acknowledge that they have done the right thing by telling you and this must have taken courage
- Consider saying to them:

  "I'm glad you told me"
  "I am sorry this has happened to you"
  "You are not to blame for what has happened. This is not your fault"
  "You have been brave telling me this"
  "I will help ensure you receive help"

React

- Do ask open questions like "Is there anything else that you want to tell me?'
  'Do you want to tell me what happened?'
- TED is a useful acronym to remember

  "Tell me about that"
  "Explain that to me"
  "Describe that to me

- Let them know that you will need to tell the Designated Safeguarding Lead
- Do not promise confidentiality (to keep a secret)
- Do not ask leading questions or prompt them
- Do not probe for further information
- Do not express disbelief
- Do not investigate or question the child, except to clarify what you have heard
- Do not ask the child to repeat what they have said to another member of staff
- Do not ask the child to write down their concerns. (However, they may ask if they can write down their concerns)

Report and Record

- Share your concerns verbally **without delay** with the Designated Safeguarding Lead or member of the safeguarding team and consider if the child is in immediate danger or needs emergency medical care. Consider the need to ring 999 or ring Children's Services directly
- Write down what the child said using their actual words including any slang terms or words you may be uncomfortable with
- Write down the time the child disclosed to you and anyone who was present
- Be factual and do not make assumptions
- Place your written notes in the hand of the Designated Safeguarding Lead

Hearing the Voice of the Child

A key message from serious case reviews both locally and nationally is that agencies don't listen sufficiently to the child's views and wishes when assessing their needs and determining if the support is effective. This can include not interpreting the child's behaviours and changes in their presentation, particularly when there are barriers to communication including their age, language acquisition or disability.

The serious case reviews following the tragic deaths of Daniel Pelka, Keanu Williams and Tia Riggs highlight the need to listen to children's views and wishes and interpret more effectively their behaviours and their interactions with significant adults in their lives.

'Working Together to Safeguard Children' (2023): A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children states that children have said that they need:

- **Vigilance:** to have adults notice when things are troubling them
- **Understanding and action:** to understand what is happening; to be heard and understood; and to have that understanding acted upon
- **Stability:** to be able to develop an on-going stable relationship of trust with those helping them
- **Respect:** to be treated with the expectation that they are competent rather than not
- **Information and engagement:** to be informed about and involved in procedures, decisions, concerns and plans
- **Explanation:** to be informed of the outcome of assessments and decisions and reasons when their views have not met with a positive response
- **Support:** to be provided with support in their own right as well as a member of their family
- **Advocacy:** to be provided with advocacy to assist them in putting forward their views
- **Protection:** to be protected against all forms of abuse, exploitation and discrimination and the right to special protection and help if a refugee

Ofsted conclude there are five main messages with regard to the voice of the child. In too many cases:

- The child was not seen frequently enough by the professionals involved, or was not asked about their views and feelings
- Agencies did not listen to adults who tried to speak on behalf of the child and who had important information to contribute
- Parents and carers prevented professionals from seeing and listening to the child
- Practitioners focused too much on the needs of the parents, especially on vulnerable parents, and overlooked the implications for the child
- Agencies did not interpret their findings well enough to protect the child

'Keeping Children Safe in Education' is clear that systems should be in place for children to express their views and give feedback.

Whilst it is not a school's role to investigate child abuse, schools should report their concerns to children's services and when required police who may require the school and other agencies to work together to contribute effectively to a holistic assessment of the child and family.

Reminder: Schools should ring children's services **without delay** to refer child protection concerns when they believe a child is suffering significant harm or likely to suffer significant harm. This should be followed up in writing by completion of the MARF (multi-agency referral form). Consent of the parents / carers is not needed to make a child protection referral to children's services. However, the parent / carer may be informed of the need to make a referral and the referral discussed with them unless it would jeopardise a police or children's services investigation or place the child or others at risk of harm.

Schools should draw upon the **Local Safeguarding Children Partnership's Responding to Need Guidance and Levels of Need Framework when determining if Family Help or a referral to children's services in needed.**

Schools should not compromise a police or children's services investigation by asking leading or probing questions where there are child protection concerns. This is particularly important when a criminal offence may have occurred including physical and sexual abuse.

Scenarios:
A child says to an adult: *'My head is sore. Mummy hit me with a stick on the head and hurt me'.*

An example of an **inappropriate leading question**:
'Does mummy do this when she has been drinking?'
'Did daddy do this to you?'
'Where you in your bedroom when this happened?

An example of an **inappropriate probing question:** *'Why do you think mummy does this?'*

A child says to an adult: *'Mummy's friend put his hand inside my knickers and touched my private parts.'*
- An example of an i**nappropriate leading question:** *'Did he ask you to keep a secret?'*
- An example of an **inappropriate probing question:** *'How often has this happened?'*

In both of the above situations the school needs to ring Children's Services **without delay to refer child protection concerns.** If there is an injury to the child's head they may also need to seek emergency medical assistance.

The member of staff should draw upon the child's own words when making a referral. Occasionally when a school has contacted Children's Services to refer child protection concerns a Social Worker may ask the school to ask a further question of the child to clarify the concerns. However, the school should be clear as to how the question should be asked.

Reminder: There are many occasions when a child presents in a way or says something that may require the member of staff to ask an appropriate question to ascertain if there are any safeguarding concerns.

Examples of safe questions:
- *'You seem upset, is something worrying you?'*
- *'Your knee looks sore, how did that happen?'*
- *'Why aren't you wearing a coat today?'*
- *'You said your mummy screamed at you, do you want to tell me about it?'*
- *'Where is your pack lunch box today?'*
- *'You said daddy caused the bruise on your leg, do you want to tell me what happened?'*
- *'You said somebody hurt you, do you want to tell me what happened?'*

It is important to remind ourselves that children don't always disclose abuse or may be unable to because of their age or communication difficulties hence adults working with children should be vigilant to physical or behavioural indicators of harm and changes in the child. We should always ensure we speak to the child in their preferred / first language especially when speaking to them in English may act as a barrier for them.

Internal Child Protection / Child Welfare Concern Form

Concerns should be reported **immediately** to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (or deputy DSL or senior member of staff). Following verbally reporting your concerns complete this form and hand it directly to the Designated Safeguarding Lead. The school's child protection procedures should always be followed. The DSL will appropriately action and file securely. It is important not to investigate concerns but for the school to gather information and report them to children's services (and when necessary police). Additional guidance can be found in part 1 and Annex B of '**Keeping Children Safe in Education**'.

PUPIL DETAILS

NAME:				**DOB:**	
ADDRESS:					
YEAR / CLASS:		**SEN STATUS:**		**ETHNICITY:**	

STAFF & CONCERN DETAILS

STAFF NAME:					
DATE OF CONCERN:		**TIME:**		**LOCATION:**	
DATE / TIME RECORD IS BEING MADE:					

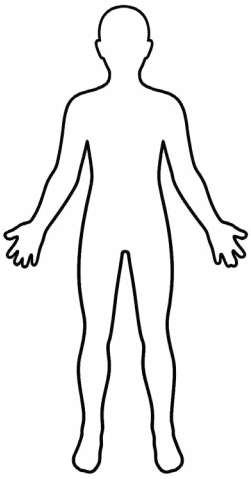
For any sections below continue recording overleaf if necessary, ensuring it is signed & dated.

NATURE OF CONCERN – WHAT ARE YOU WORRIED ABOUT?

Sign and date the record at the end of your statement.

Ensure you act in a timely manner when reporting concerns, especially if there is an injury noted.

Provide details of the incident or concerns including times, dates, description of any injuries (use body map to indicate area of injury), witness details, what you have observed, heard or been told, if the information is first hand, clearly differentiate between fact and opinion, any other relevant details / information, etc.



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THE CHILD'S VIEWS

Please clearly record the wishes and feelings of the child (record in capital letters when noting their words). If you have used a particular tool (e.g. three houses) attach it to this document.

TO BE COMPLETED BY THE DSL - ACTIONS TAKEN:

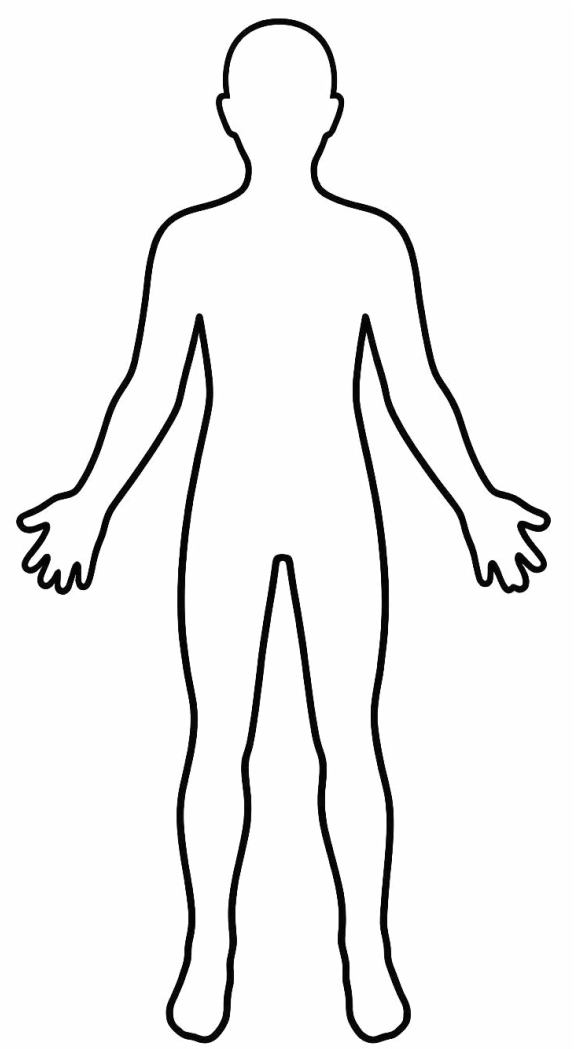
Clearly sign & date at the end of the record.

Consider Signs of Safety when assessing the situation: What are we worried about? What is working well? What needs to happen?

Record all discussions, communications, referrals & decisions made. Include details of conversations with parents / other agencies & rationale behind key decision making.

Body Map

Child's Name:	
Date and time of recording:	
Person completing body map:	
Note the position of the injury and describe what has been seen (e.g. bruises, cuts, grazes, burns, marks, etc.)	



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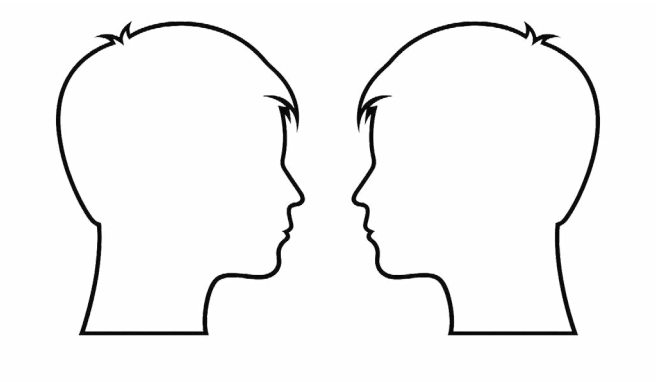

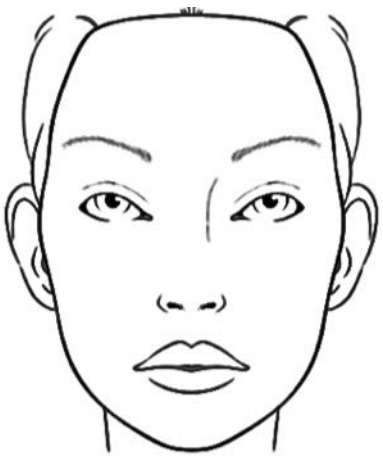

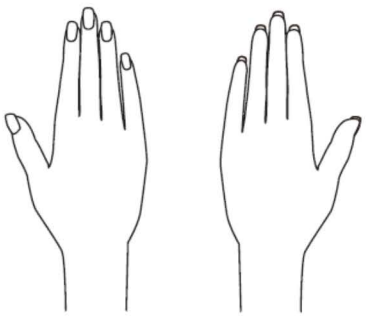

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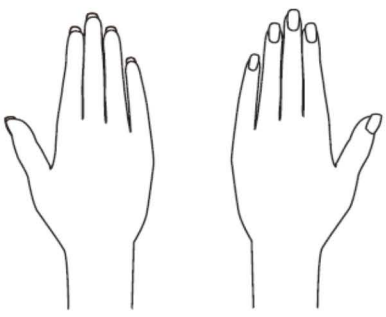

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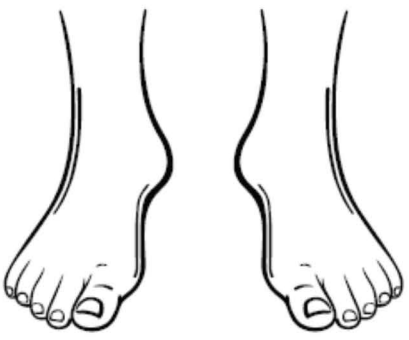

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Schools' Safeguarding Flowchart

If a member of staff or volunteer has concerns about a **child's welfare** they should discuss it **without delay** with the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead or Deputy Safeguarding Lead or Senior Leader. The **Safeguarding Children Partnership's Levels of Need Guidance** should be drawn upon when considering the child's needs. You may want to contact the local Family Help Hub / Team to discuss concerns and specifically concerns that sit just below the level requiring a referral to Children's Services (Child in Need and Child Protection). If the member of staff or volunteer does not agree with the decision by the Designated Safeguarding Lead not to make a referral to Children's Services then they should press for re-consideration and, if required, make the referral themselves. The Designated Safeguarding Lead must be informed of any referral made and must maintain oversight of all referrals or Family Help Assessments.

If you have **Child Protection concerns and a child requires immediate protection and urgent action**, or you have reasonable cause to **suspect** that the **child is suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm then you should telephone Children's Services (and if required the police) without delay.** Whilst the consent of the parent / carer is not needed in order to make a child protection referral you should discuss the need to make a referral with parents / carers, when safe to do so. (If in doubt consult with Children's Services) You should then complete a written Multi-Agency Referral Form within 24 hours.

Halton 0151 907 8305
Knowsley 0151 443 2600
Lancashire 0300 123 6720
Liverpool 0151 459 2606
Sefton 0151 934 4013
St Helens 01744 676767
Warrington 01925 443322
Wigan 01942 828300
Wirral 0151 606 2008

If you believe a child's needs warrant a Statutory **Child in Need assessment** then you should seek the consent of the parent / carer before completing a Multi-Agency Referral Form to Children's Services. If consent is not given you are still able to make a referral if you have safeguarding concerns.

Within **one working day** of a referral being received, a Local Authority social worker should make a decision about the type of response that is required and acknowledge receipt to the referrer.' WT

If the referrer does not agree with the decision made by Children's Services then they should press for re-consideration and follow the **Local Escalation and Resolution Procedures**.

If a referral to Children's Services is not required then a F**amily Help Assessment** should be initiated when the child has unmet needs that are likely to require a multi-agency approach. **Guidance is available from your local Family Help Hub / Team. If your concerns escalate you may need to refer to children's services**.

In cases where consent is not given for a Family Help Assessment, practitioners should consider how the needs of the child might be met. If at any time it is considered that the child may be a child in need, as defined in the **Children Act 1989**, or that the child has suffered significant harm or is likely to do so, a referral should be made immediately to Local Authority children's social care. WT 2018

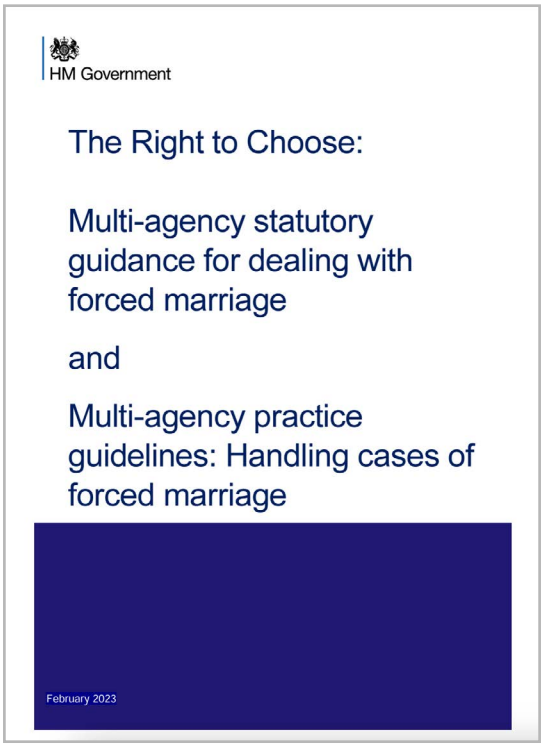
Family Help Assessments Child in Need or Child Protection Plans should draw upon the views and wishes of the child. They should be focussed on achieving positive outcomes for the child in a timely way. The child's needs should be kept under review and actions should be taken promptly in response to any additional concerns / needs. **This overview should be read alongside part 1 and Annex B of 'Keeping Children Safe in Education'; the DfE Guidance 'What to if you are worried a child is being abused', local safeguarding procedures and Local Guidance, for example child exploitation, fabricated illnesses, HBA or children missing protocol.**

Forced Marriage (FM) and So-Called Honour Based Abuse (HBA) Guidance

Local Safeguarding Children Partnership procedures can be found on their websites.

The NSPCC provide guidance for young people on their associated website **www.childline.org.uk** (They provide links to other sites including Karma Nirvana, Child Helpline International and the Freedom Charity).

Additional multi-agency practice guidance, videos and a children's book can be found here: **www.gov.uk/guidance/forced-marriage**



In 2018, the UK Forced Marriage Unit (FMU) gave advice or support in relation to ***1,764*** possible cases of forced marriage. ***33%*** of these cases involved children below the age of 18 and ***31%*** involved 18-25 year olds. ***17%*** of cases involved men. In 2018 the cases related to ***74*** countries with ***119 cases (7%)*** having no overseas element, with the potential or actual forced marriage taking place entirely within the UK. Cases related to Pakistan made up ***44% (769 cases)***, with Bangladesh ***9% (157***) and India ***6% (110)***

Cases of forced marriage and honour based abuse can involve complex and sensitive issues. It is important to remember the 'Once Chance Rule' which reminds us to believe them and act immediately to protect them as we may only get one opportunity.

Schools will find the following information will support them to understand their responsibilities. Schools should always contact **Children's Services** if they believe a child is at risk of harm or in need. **They should contact police to provide immediate protection to the child.**

The Law: Forcing someone to marry against their will is a criminal offence. The maximum penalty for the offence of forced marriage is seven years imprisonment. Law enforcement agencies will also be able to pursue perpetrators in other countries where a UK National is involved under powers defined in legislation. The maximum penalty for breach of a Forced Marriage Protection Order is five years imprisonment.

Definitions:

An Arranged Marriage: Whilst both the spouses' families take a lead role to arrange the marriage the choice to accept the arrangements remains with the individuals themselves.

A Forced Marriage: Coercion is often involved to force someone into marriage against their wishes. This can include someone with learning difficulties who is unable to consent. Coercion can include physical, financial, sexual or emotional pressure. Forced marriage is therefore a form of domestic abuse or child abuse.

So-called Honour Based Abuse: 'Honour' based abuse is a crime which is committed to protect or defend the perceived honour of the family and / or community.

Both Forced Marriage and Honour Based Abuse is a fundamental abuse of someone's human rights.

What are the justifications behind Forced Marriage and so-called honour killings / violence?

The Home Office have identified a number of key motives:

- Controlling unwanted sexuality (including perceived promiscuity, or being lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender) – particularly the behaviour and sexuality of women
- Controlling unwanted behaviour, for example, alcohol and drug use, wearing make-up or behaving in what is perceived to be a ***"westernised manner"***
- Preventing ***"unsuitable"*** relationships, e.g. outside the ethnic, cultural, religious or caste group
- Protecting ***"family honour"*** or ***"izzat"***
- Responding to peer group or family pressure
- Attempting to strengthen family links
- Achieving financial gain
- Ensuring land, property and wealth remain within the family
- Protecting perceived cultural ideals
- Protecting perceived religious ideals which are misguided
- Ensuring care for a child or adult with special needs when parents or existing carers are unable to fulfil that role
- Assisting claims for UK residence and citizenship
- Long-standing family commitments

Communities: Anyone can be at risk of forced marriage and honour based abuse, but some communities are more at risk than others including Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, Afghanistan, Iraq and Somalia.

The Home Office Guidance (Multi-agency Statutory Guidance for dealing with forced marriage) provides some possible indicators or warning signs in respect of forced marriage, covering education, employment, health, family history and police involvement.

These include:

- Absence and persistent absence
- Request for extended leave of absence and failure to return from visits to country of origin
- Fear about forthcoming school holidays
- Surveillance by siblings or cousins at school
- Decline in behaviour, engagement, performance or punctuality
- Poor exam results
- Being withdrawn from school by those with parental responsibility
- Removal from a day centre of a person with a physical or learning disability
- Not allowed to attend extra-curricular activities
- Sudden announcement of engagement to a stranger
- Prevented from going on to further / higher education
- Accompanied to doctors or clinics
- Eating disorders
- Depression / isolation
- Substance misuse
- Unwanted pregnancy
- Female Genital Mutilation
- Siblings forced to marry
- Early marriage of siblings
- Self-harm or suicide of siblings
- Death of a parent
- Family disputes
- Running away from home
- Unreasonable restrictions e.g. kept at home by parents
- Victim or other siblings within the family reported missing
- Reports of domestic abuse, harassment or breaches of the peace at the family home
- The victim reported for offences e.g. shoplifting or substance misuse
- Threats to kill and attempts to kill or harm
- Reports of other offences such as rape or kidnap
- Acid attacks

If you become aware of cases of forced marriage and honour based abuse consider the following advice. Do the following:

- See them immediately in a secure and private place where the conversation cannot be overheard.
- See them on their own – even if they attend with others
- Consider the need for immediate protection by ringing the Police
- Make a referral to Children's Services **without delay**
- Remember if a child is at risk you cannot keep a secret but must refer them to Children's Services and Police

Never: ***mediate with the family, fail to report, underestimate the risk, use a family member as an interpreter or send the child way.***

Useful Contacts:

National Support

- Forced Marriage Unit 0207 008 0151, fmu@fco.gov.uk
- Child line: 0800 1111 www.childline.org.uk
- Karma Nirvana Helpline: 0800 5999 247
- NSPCC: 0800 800 5000

Local Contacts:

- Pan Merseyside Forced Marriage (FM) and Honour Based Abuse (HBA) Protocol: https://liverpoolscp.trixonline.co.uk/chapter/forced-marriage
- Savera 0800 107 0726 www.saverauk.co.uk
- Amadudu (BME Refugee): 0151 734 0083
- South Liverpool DAS: 0151 494 2222, LDAS: 0151 263-7474
- Irish Community Care: 0151 237 3987
- WHISC: 0151 707 1826

Useful Words

You may overhear some of the following words which may raise your concerns. Equally knowledge of these words may build trust with the victim.

- ***Izzat*** – mainly used in South Asian families meaning Honour
- ***Namus*** – used very often in Middle Eastern Context – interpreted as honour as it directly relates to women's virtue and overall sexual integrity
- ***Ird*** (Bedouin) – code of honour for women, linked to sexual integrity "protected by men" and linked to Sharaf
- ***Sharaf*** – general honour code which includes responsibility for protecting Ird
- ***Sharam*** – used mainly in South Asian communities meaning 'shame'
- ***Diss*** – used mainly in Western urban context taken from the meaning 'disrespect'

Female Genital Mutilation

Local Safeguarding Children Partnership's procedures and either the pan-Merseyside, pan-Cheshire or Greater Manchester protocol can be found on your relevant LSCP website.

The NSPCC provide guidance and a short film about ending FGM which can be found on their website. They also provide a 24/7 FGM helpline: 0800 028 3550 or email **fgmhelp@nspcc.org.uk**

Online training can be found here: www.FGMelearning.co.uk

Additional multi-agency practice guidance can be found here: www.gov.uk/government/publications/multi-agency-statutory-guidance-on-female-genital-mutilation

This government guidance provides extensive appendices covering:

- Cultural underpinnings and motives of FGM
- Consequences of FGM
- Risk factors
- Talking about FGM
- Safeguarding
- Care and support
- Terms used for FGM in other languages
- Contact information
- Resources

FGM is a criminal offence in the UK and anyone found practising FGM can face a maximum penalty of 14 years imprisonment. Courts can also grant Female Genital Mutilation Orders to protect and safeguard victims and potential victims of FGM. This might involve the surrendering of someone at risk's passport to prevent them from being taken abroad.

FGM is an extremely harmful and abusive practice and there are known cases of it leading to someone's death. 'FGM is often an embedded social norm' within some families and communities. It is often thought to be essential for a girl to become a proper woman and to be marriageable. The practice is not required by any religion.

'Section 5B of the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 (as inserted by section 74 of the Serious Crime Act 2015) places a statutory duty upon teachers along with regulated health and social care professionals in England and Wales, to report to the police where they discover (either through disclosure by the victim or visual evidence) that FGM appears to have been carried out on a girl under 18' DfE 2016.

FGM is prevalent in at least 30 countries. These are concentrated around the Atlantic coast to the Horn of Africa, in areas of the Middle East and in some countries of Asia.

UNICEF estimates that over 200 million girls and women worldwide have undergone FGM. Currently in the UK it is estimated that approximately 103,000 children and women aged 15-49 and approximately 24,000 women aged 50 and over have migrated to England and Wales and are living with the consequences of FGM. Approximately 10,000 girls under 15 who have migrated to England and Wales are likely to have undergone FGM. Approximately 60,000 girls aged 0-14 were born in England and Wales to mothers who had undergone FGM.

It is believed that FGM may happen to girls within the UK as well as those taken overseas. For school age children it is likely they will be taken overseas at the start of the school holidays.

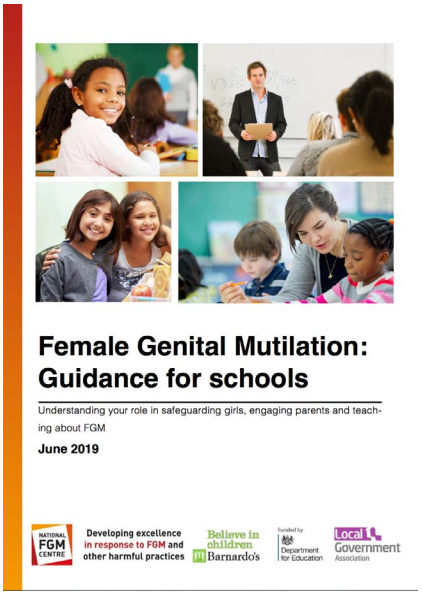
FGM is known by a variety of names, including 'female genital cutting', 'circumcision' or 'initiation'. The term 'female circumcision' is anatomically incorrect and misleading in terms of the harm FGM can cause. The terms 'FGM' or 'cut' are increasingly used at a community level, although they are not always understood by individuals in practising communities, largely because they are English terms.

FGM is practised in more than 28 countries across Africa, Asia and the Middle East, including Burkina Faso, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, The Gambia, Guinea, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Sierra Leone, Somalia and Sudan. UK communities most at risk include Kenyan, Somali, Sudanese, Sierra Leoni, Egyptian, Nigerian and Eritrean as well as non-African communities including Yemeni, Afghani, Kurdish, Indonesian and Pakistani.

A person is guilty of an offence if he / she, excises, infibulates or otherwise mutilates the whole or any part of a girl's labia majora, labia minora or clitoris except for operations performed on specific physical and mental health grounds by registered medical or nursing practitioners. It is also an offence to assist a girl to mutilate her own genitalia. FGM is an offence which extends to acts performed outside of the UK and to any person who advises, helps or forces a girl to inflict FGM on herself. Any person found guilty of an offence under the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 will be liable to a fine or imprisonment of up to 14 years, or both.

Female Genital Mutilation Guidance for Schools

In June 2019 the National FGM Centre in conjunction with Barnardos, released additional non-statutory guidance for schools regarding Female Genital Mutilation.



The document contains key information including:

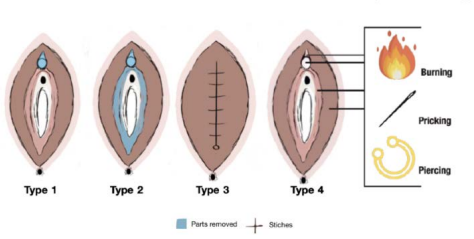
- General information on FGM & the law
- FGM risk indicators
- Requirements of the RSE Guidance regarding FGM
- How to explore concerns with children and parents / carers
- A resource on how to explore concerns and make referrals to children's social care

It is strongly recommended that school safeguarding teams read the whole document which can be found here http://nationalfgmcentre.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/FGM-Schools-Guidance-National-FGM-Centre.pdf.

The following are some key extracts for all staff:

1.1 What is FGM?

Female genital mutilation (FGM) comprises all procedures that involve partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons (World Health Organisation).



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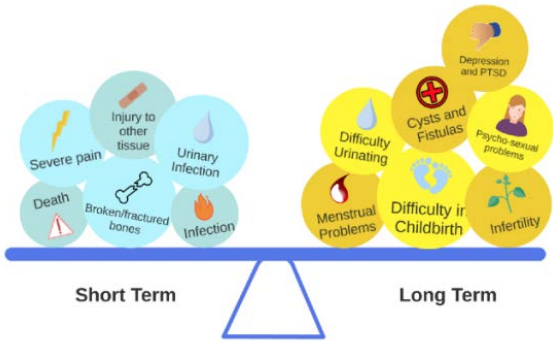
1.2 Possible Health Implications of FGM



Often, women who are able to make the link between their experience of FGM and their on-going physical or psychological problems may be less likely to support or carry out FGM on their daughters. This may also be the case for women, who are involved in or supportive of FGM advocacy work. Some women may not be able to identify any health consequence at all.

The guidance also offers some practical advice regarding how to talk to a girl when you have a concern. It is important to note that you do not have to specifically ask about FGM.

3.1 When a girl(s) is going on holiday

If a girl has an upcoming holiday, especially one to a country of high prevalence, you can talk to the girl to explore:

Who is she going with?	"Is your whole family going with you?"	How is she feeling?	"How are you feeling about going there?"
Where she is going?	"I overheard you talking about your holiday, where are you off to?"	What she will be doing?	"What sorts of things will you do there? Will you be meeting others there?"

After speaking with the girl, you may feel it is necessary to speak with her parent(s)/carer(s) as well to ensure that the information given by the child and parent(s)/carer(s) are consistent.

You should explore further and follow your normal safeguarding procedures by contacting children's social care, if:

- The girl expresses concern or reluctancy to talk about the holiday
- The parent(s)/carer(s) account is different to that of the girls. For example, the girl says they are traveling on a different day to what the parent(s)/carer(s) say
- The girl(s) siblings or friends express concern about the holiday
- The parent(s) are reluctant to talk about the holiday or deny that there is an upcoming holiday
- Only the female children are going on the holiday
- The child is travelling for an unknown period of time and it is unclear where she will be going or who will be looking after her

At what age is FGM carried out?

The age at which FGM is carried out varies greatly. It can be carried out any time from shortly after birth up to and including adulthood. Girls between 4 and 14 years of age are most at risk. In adults FGM may be carried out immediately before marriage and immediately after childbirth.

FGM is usually carried out by an older woman in a practicing community, for whom it is a way of gaining prestige. It can also be a lucrative source of income.

The procedure is normally carried out by several women unexpectedly approaching a girl and holding her down on the floor. Hazards include lack of medical expertise, lack of anaesthesia and lack of hygiene. Instruments used can include unsterilized household knives, razor blades, broken glass and stones.

Types of FGM

FGM has been classified by the World Health Organisation into 4 types:

- ***Type 1*** - (Clitoridectomy) Cutting away the clitoral hood, with or without the removal of the clitoris
- ***Type 2*** - (Excision) Partial or total removal of the clitoris and the labia minora
- ***Type 3*** - (Infibulation) Narrowing of the vaginal opening through the creation of a covering seal. The seal is formed by cutting and repositioning the inner, or outer, labia, with or without removal of the clitoris
- ***Type 4*** – All other harmful procedures to the female genitalia for non-medical purposes e.g. pricking, piercing, incision, scraping and cauterising the genital area.

Justifications used by those who practice FGM

In reality, there is no social, moral or religious justification for FGM. However, those who support FGM may use the following reasons or 'myths' to try to explain the practice.

They may say FGM:

- Brings status and respect to the girl
- Preserves a girl's virginity / chastity
- Is part of being a woman
- Is a rite of passage
- Gives a girl social acceptance, especially for marriage
- Upholds the family "honour"
- Cleanses and purifies the girl
- Gives the girl and her family a sense of belonging to the community
- Fulfils a religious requirement mistakenly believed to exist
- Perpetuates a custom / tradition
- Helps girls and women to be clean and hygienic
- Is aesthetically desirable
- Is mistakenly believed to make childbirth safer for the infant
- Rids the family of bad luck or evil spirits

Potential risk factors may include:

- A girl is unexpectedly absent from school
- A girl has attended a travel clinic or equivalent for vaccinations / anti-malarials
- Sections are missing from the child's red book (Personal Child Health Record)
- The child's mother, older sibling or cousin has undertaken FGM
- The child's father comes from a community known to practise FGM
- The family indicate that there are strong levels of influence held by elders and / or elders are involved in bringing up the child

- A women / family believe that FGM is integral to cultural or religious identity
- The child / family is not engaging with professionals
- A child from a practising community being withdrawn by parents / carers from sex education lessons or PSHE lessons
- A family arranging a long holiday abroad in a country where the practice is prevalent
- A child belonging to one of the high risk / practising communities
- A young person talking of getting ready for marriage, becoming a woman or being cut
- A family is known to social care in relation to other safeguarding concerns
- A young person becoming withdrawn and anxious
- A young person being concerned about a forthcoming holiday or a visit by a relative
- The girl / family has limited integration within the community
- Parents state that they or a relative will take the child out of the country for a prolonged period
- A child may talk about a long holiday (usually within the school summer holiday) to her country of origin or another country where the practice is prevalent
- A child may confide to a professional that she is to have a 'special procedure' or to attend a special occasion 'to become a woman'
- A professional hears reference to FGM in conversation, for example a child may tell other children about it
- A girl requests help from a teacher or other adult because she is aware or suspects that she is at immediate risk of FGM
- A parent or family member expresses concern that FGM may be carried out on the girl

Indicators that a girl may have already been subjected to FGM:

- A girl asks for help
- A girl confides in a professional that FGM has taken place
- A girl has difficulty walking, sitting or standing or looks uncomfortable
- A girl who finds it hard to sit still for long periods of time, and this was not a problem previously
- A girl spends longer in the bathroom or toilet due to difficulties urinating
- A girl spends long periods of time away from the classroom due to bladder or menstrual problems
- A girl who has frequent urinary, menstrual or stomach problems
- Prolonged absence from school
- Changes in behaviour following a holiday e.g. becoming more secretive
- Becoming more withdrawn or subdued or isolating themselves from others
- Increased emotional or psychological needs
- A girl talking about pain or discomfort between her legs
- A child talking about having to keep a secret
- A girl who avoids physical activity or requires to be excused from P.E. without a G.P. letter

What schools should do:

- **Listen to the child alone**
- **Ring the police immediately if you feel the child is at immediate risk of harm**
- **Ring Children's Services without delay**
- **If you identify a female under 18 has had FGM you have a duty to report this under the Serious Crime Act 2015 to the police via the non-emergency number 101. This is referred to as Mandatory Reporting**

What schools should NEVER do:

- Delay sharing information
- Attempt to mediate with the family or the community
- Inform the parents they have made a referral **without** the agreement of police and children's services

Remember: The parents may believe they are doing the right thing by their child and informing them may put the child at risk because they may act to silence her or bring forward their plans to take her abroad or undertake FGM.

We must remember that FGM is gender based violence.

Breast Ironing or Flattening

What is Breast Ironing or Flattening?
Breast Ironing (also known as "Breast Flattening") is the process whereby young pubescent girls' breasts are ironed, massaged and / or pounded down through the use of hard or heated objects in order for the breasts to disappear or delay the development of the breasts entirely. It is believed that by carrying out this act, young girls will be protected from harassment, rape, abduction and early forced marriage and therefore be kept in education.

In some families, large stones, a hammer or spatula that have been heated over scorching coals can be used to compress the breast tissue. Other families may opt to use an elastic belt or binder to press the breasts so as to prevent them from growing. Breast flattening usually starts with the first signs of puberty, which can be as young as nine years old and is usually carried out by female relatives.

Much like Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), Breast Ironing is a harmful cultural practice and is child abuse. Professionals working with children and young people must be able to identify the signs and symptoms of girls who are at risk of or have undergone breast ironing. Similarly to Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), breast ironing is classified as physical abuse therefore schools must follow their Local Safeguarding Children's Partnership Procedures.

Who is at risk?
According to UN estimates, up to 3.8 million girls worldwide are affected by breast ironing. Breast ironing can happen anywhere in the world, but research indicates that breast flattening has occurred in the countries of Benin, Cameroon, Chad, Cote D'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, Kenya, South Africa, Togo and Zimbabwe. However, it should be noted that just because a country is not listed it does not mean it does not happen, it simply means that there is no research in that area.

Health Consequences
Due to the type of instruments that may be used, the type of force and the lack of after-care, significant health and developmental issues may occur, such as:

- Abscesses
- Cysts
- Itching
- Tissue damage
- Infection
- Discharge of milk
- Dissymmetry of the breasts
- Severe fever
- The complete disappearance of one or both breasts

There may also be an impact on the child's social and psychological wellbeing.

"Justification" for breast flattening
The practice is carried out under the misguided intention to "protect" women and girls from men's sexual harassment. In many cases, the abuser thinks they are doing something good for the child by delaying the effects of puberty and the practice is designed to:

- Make teenage girls look less "womanly"
- Prevent pregnancy and rape
- Enable the girl to continue her education
- Prevent dishonour being brought upon the family if the girl begins sexual relations outside of marriage
- Deter unwanted attention

In practicing communities, it is believed many boys and men believe girls whose breasts have grown are ready to have sex, therefore elders (mothers, grandmothers, aunties etc.) believe that by suppressing a girl's development of her breast she will be protected from rape, kidnapping, sexual harassment and early forced marriage.

The Law

There is no specific law within the UK around breast flattening or breast ironing, however it is a form of physical abuse and if professionals are concerned a child may be at risk of, or suffering significant harm, they must refer to their local safeguarding procedures.

Professionals may be reluctant to tackle the issue because of 'cultural sensitivities' – the words 'culture', 'tradition' or 'religion' might come up when trying to explain this harmful practice, but as in the case of female genital mutilation (FGM), breast ironing is a ritualised form of child abuse.

Risks

The girl generally believes that the practice is being carried out for her own good and she will often remain silent. Young pubescent girls usually aged between 9 – 15 years old and from practising communities are most at risk of breast ironing. Breast ironing is a well-kept secret between the young girl and her mother. Often the father remains completely unaware.

Indicators that a girl may be at risk:

- A girl is embarrassed about her body
- A girl is born to a woman who has undergone breast flattening
- A girl has an older sibling or cousin who has undergone breast flattening
- If there are references to breast flattening in conversation, for example a girl may tell other children about it
- A girl may request help from a teacher or another adult if she is aware or suspects that she is at immediate risk
- A girl from an affected community is withdrawn from PSHE and / or Sex and Relationship Education as her parents wish to keep her uninformed about her rights
- One or both parents or elder family members consider breast flattening integral to their cultural identity
- The family indicate that there are strong levels of influence held by elders who are involved in bringing up female children and support breast flattening
- A girl/family has limited level of integration within UK community

Indicators that a girl is undergoing breast flattening:

In addition to the list above, professionals should be mindful that:

- A girl may disclose to a teacher, social worker, GP or another medical professional
- Some girls may ask for help, perhaps talk about pain or discomfort in their chest area, but may not be explicit about the problem due to embarrassment or fear
- A girl may display reluctance to undergo medical examination
- A girl may be fearful of changing for physical activities due to scars showing or bandages being visible

If you are concerned that a girl is at risk of breast flattening, a referral must be made to your local children's services.

If you are concerned that the girl is in immediate danger, contact the police by calling 999.

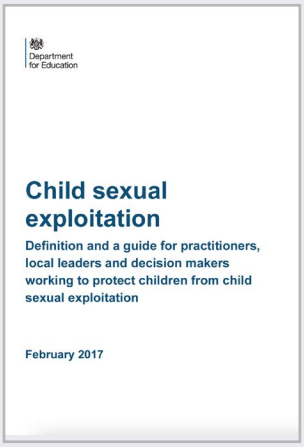
Useful videos:

- *National FGM Centre – What is Breast Ironing? Animation: https://youtu.be/imCmlG3_3tc*
- *Channel 4 News article – the practice of breast ironing: https://youtu.be/oy7SlYEQwXw*

Child Sexual Exploitation

Schools should follow the relevant local protocol and pathway available on their Local Safeguarding Children Partnership website. The DfE has produced revised Guidance to support professionals working with children.

A definition of sexual exploitation:



The DfE define child exploitation as:

'Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and / or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.'

All referrals to children's services on the MARF (multi agency referral form) should be accompanied by pan-Merseyside child exploitation assessment tool.

The DfE remind us that like other forms of abuse, child sexual exploitation:

- Can affect any child or young person (male or female) under the age of 18 years, including 16 and 17 year olds who can legally consent to have sex
- Can still be abuse even if the sexual activity appears consensual
- Can include both contact (penetrative and non-penetrative acts) and non-contact sexual activity
- Can take place in person or via technology, or a combination of both
- Can involve force and / or enticement-based methods of compliance and may, or may not, be accompanied by violence or threats of violence
- May occur without the child or young person's immediate knowledge (through others copying videos or images they have created and posting on social media, for example)
- Can be perpetrated by individuals or groups, males or females, and children or adults. The abuse can be a one-off occurrence or a series of incidents over time, and range from opportunistic to complex organised abuse; and is typified by some form of power imbalance in favour of those perpetrating the abuse. Whilst age may be the most obvious, this power imbalance can also be due to a range of other factors including gender, sexual identity, cognitive ability, physical strength, status, and access to economic or other resources

Sexual exploitation can have links to other types of crime including:

- Child trafficking
- Domestic abuse
- Sexual violence in intimate relationships
- Grooming (including online grooming)
- Abusive images of children and their distribution
- Drugs-related offences
- Gang-related activity
- Immigration-related offences
- Domestic servitude

The following are examples of vulnerabilities in children more susceptible to abuse:

- Having a prior experience of neglect, physical and / or sexual abuse
- Lack of a safe / stable home environment, now or in the past (domestic abuse or parental substance misuse, mental health issues or criminality, for example)
- Recent bereavement or loss
- Social isolation or social difficulties
- Absence of a safe environment to explore sexuality
- Economic vulnerability
- Homelessness or insecure accommodation status
- Connections with other children and young people who are being sexually exploited
- Family members or other connections involved in adult sex work
- Having a physical or learning disability
- Being in care (particularly those in residential care and those with interrupted care histories)
- Sexual identity

Potential indicators of child exploitation can include:

- Acquisition of money, clothes, mobile phones etc. without plausible explanation
- Gang-association and / or isolation from peers / social networks
- Exclusion or unexplained absences from school, college or work
- Leaving home / care without explanation and persistently going missing or returning late
- Excessive receipt of texts / phone calls
- Returning home under the influence of drugs / alcohol
- Inappropriate sexualised behaviour
- Sexually transmitted infections
- Evidence of / suspicions of physical or sexual assault
- Relationships with controlling or significantly older individuals or groups
- Multiple callers (unknown adults or peers)
- Frequenting areas known for sex work
- Concerning use of internet or other social media
- Increasing secretiveness around behaviours
- Self-harm or significant changes in emotional wellbeing

Additional Guidance provided by Barnardos and Merseyside Safeguarding Partnerships:

Child Sexual Exploitation is largely a 'hidden problem'. The law defines anyone below the age of 18 as children. Legally a child below the age of 13 is not capable of consenting to sex. Whilst the legal age that someone can consent to sex is 16 years of age, consensual non-exploitative sex between children of similar age below 16 is unlikely to lead to a prosecution. However, it is clear children are unable to freely consent to sexual activity when threatened by violence, when there is an imbalance in power or when they are under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Sadly, there is evidence that too many professionals and communities describe the victims as making 'lifestyle choices by engaging in risky behaviour' and even 'promiscuous', 'prostituting themselves' or 'liking the glamour'.

Here there is a clear failure to acknowledge the initial manipulative grooming process or the threats or actual violence. Unfortunately, these children's own challenging behaviours and criminal activities are seen ahead of the underlying causes, even when sexual exploitation is recognised. It is evident that poor assessments do not always lead to sexual exploitation even being identified. In addition, isolation from friends and family and a growing dependence on abusers is a characteristic of child exploitation cases.

The CSE National Working Group state:
'Sexual exploitation of children and young people under 18 involves exploitative situations, contexts and relationships where young people (or a third person or persons) receive 'something' (e.g. food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts, money) as a result of them performing, and / or another or others performing on them, sexual activities. Child sexual exploitation can occur through the use of technology without the child's immediate recognition; for example being persuaded to post sexual images on the Internet / mobile phones without immediate payment or gain. In all cases, those exploiting the child / young person have power over them by virtue of their age, gender, intellect, physical strength and / or economic or other resources. Violence, coercion and intimidation are common, involvement in exploitative relationships being characterised in the main by the child or young person's limited availability of choice resulting from their social / economic and / or emotional vulnerability.

Research by Barnardo's (Puppet on a String: The urgent need to cut children free from sexual exploitation, 2011) indicates that there are different forms of sexual exploitation:

1. Inappropriate relationships which usually involve an older perpetrator who has power or control over the young person (physical, emotional or financial). The young person may believe they are in a loving relationship or may simply be expected to have sex for food and shelter.
2. The 'Boyfriend' model is where the perpetrator grooms the young person to believe they are in a relationship before coercing or forcing them to have sex with friends and others. Barnardo's report a rise in this type of peer activity which is sometimes linked to gang activity.
3. Organised / networked sexual exploitation or trafficking. This is undertaken by networks of serious organised criminals who organise sex parties and prostitute young girls and boys. This may involve girls being traded and moved around the country. Young boys and girls will also be forced into recruiting other victims.

Barnardos provides the following key guidance:

Who is most at risk?
Young people who are socially, emotionally and economically vulnerable are at particular risk of sexual exploitation.

The following are typical vulnerabilities in children prior to abuse:

- Living in a chaotic or dysfunctional household (including parental substance use, domestic violence, parental mental health issues, and parental criminality)
- History of abuse (including familial child sexual abuse, risk of forced marriage, risk of 'honour'-based violence, physical and emotional abuse and neglect)
- Recent bereavement or loss
- Gang association either through relatives, peers or intimate relationships
- Attending school with young people who are sexually exploited
- Learning disabilities
- Unsure about their sexual orientation or unable to disclose sexual orientation to their families
- Friends with young people who are sexually exploited
- Homeless
- Lacking friends from the same age group
- Living in a gang neighbourhood
- Living in residential care
- Living in a hostel, bed and breakfast accommodation or a foyer
- Low self-esteem or self-confidence
- Young carer
- Excluded from school

The following signs and behaviour are generally seen in children who are already being sexually exploited:

- Associating with significantly older men
- Getting into cars of an unknown male, including being picked up at school or care home
- Having keys to unknown premises or having hotel keys / key cards
- Unusual association with taxi drivers / firms
- Missing from home or care, absence from school
- Regularly returning home late or going missing overnight or for several days
- Knowledge of different towns or cities
- Being defensive about where they have been and what they have been doing
- Physical injuries and having marks or scars on the body which they try to conceal
- Drug or alcohol misuse
- Involvement in criminal offending behaviour
- Becoming disruptive at home or school
- Repeat sexually-transmitted infections, pregnancy and terminations
- Change in physical appearance including looking tired or ill and sleeping during the day
- Evidence of sexual bullying and / or vulnerability through the internet and / or social networking sites
- Disclosure of a sexual assault which is later withdrawn
- Estranged from their family and being hostile and aggressive with parents / carers
- Receipt of gifts from unknown sources. (e.g. money, mobile phones, clothes, jewellery)
- Having multiple mobile phones and / or sim cards
- Overt sexualised dress
- Sexting
- Changes in physical appearance (more / less make up, poor self-image)
- Recruiting others into exploitative situations
- Poor mental health
- Self-harm or thoughts of or attempts at suicide
- Displaying sexually inappropriate or harmful behaviours

Adults and young people should be aware of the grooming process which involves:

Targeting Stage:

- Observing and identifying a vulnerable young person and befriending them and gaining their trust

Friendship Forming Stage:

- Making the young person feel special
- Spending time alone with them
- Giving gifts, compliments, food, shelter
- Listening and remembering
- Keeping secrets and being a listening 'ear'
- Offering support and protection
- Pretending 'to understand them'
- Testing out physical contact e.g. accidental touching

Loving Relationship Stage

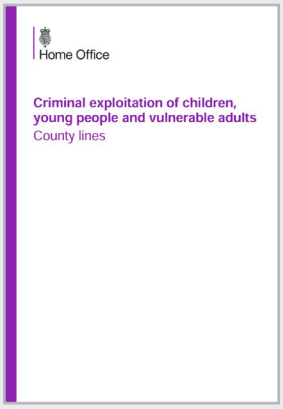
- Establishing a sexual relationship
- Becoming their boyfriend / girlfriend
- Lowering their inhibitions e.g. by showing them pornography
- Engaging in forbidden activities e.g. night clubs, alcohol and drugs
- Being inconsistent by building up hope and then punishing them

Abusive Relationship Stage

- Becomes 'an unloving' sexual relationship
- Withdrawal of love and friendship
- Isolating them from family and friends
- Manipulating the young person by suggesting that the young person 'owes them'
- Threatening behaviour
- Physical and sexual assaults
- Giving them drugs and alcohol
- Making them have sex with other people
- Reinforcing dependency by stating to the young person they are 'damaged goods'
- Developing feelings of guilt, shame and fear within the young person

Child Criminal Exploitation

Schools should follow the relevant local protocol and pathway available on their Local Safeguarding Children Partnership website.



In October 2023 the DfE updated guidance in respect of criminal exploitation with the expectation that all frontline school staff will become familiar with the guidance.

It provides:

- A definition of the term 'county lines exploitation'
- Describes the impact on young people
- Describes characteristics of children who may be vulnerable
- Sets out signs to look out for and how to respond
- Provides useful case studies

County Lines Exploitation is the police term for urban gangs supplying drugs to suburban areas and market and coastal towns using dedicated phone lines. It involves child criminal exploitation as the gangs use children and vulnerable people to move drugs and money. The gang may establish a base by taking over a vulnerable adult's home. Issues involved include drugs, violence, gangs, safeguarding, criminal and sexual exploitation, modern slavery and missing persons.

It can affect a child or young person or vulnerable adult and is still exploitation even if the activity appears consensual. It can involve force or enticement-based methods together with threats of violence or actual violence. It can be perpetuated by individuals or groups, males or females and young people or adults. It typically involves some form of power imbalance, including gender, cognitive ability, physical strength, status and access to economic or other resources.

Whilst young people aged 15-16 years old are most commonly exploited, children as young as 12 are known to be exploited by gangs to act as drug couriers. Both males and females are exploited, with social media sometimes used to make the initial contact.

Factors that heighten a person's vulnerability include:

- Having poor experience of neglect, physical and / or sexual abuse
- Lack of a safe / stable home environment, now or in the past (domestic abuse or parental substance misuse, mental health issues or criminality, for example)
- Social isolation or social difficulties
- Economic vulnerability
- Homelessness or insecure accommodation status
- Connections with other people involved in gangs
- Having a physical or learning disability
- Having mental health or substance misuse issues
- Being in care (particularly those in residential care and those with interrupted care histories)

Some indicators of 'County Lines' involvement and exploitation include:

- Persistently going missing from school or home and / or being found out-of-area
- Unexplained acquisition of money, clothes or mobile phones
- Excessive receipt of texts / phone calls
- Relationships with controlling / older individuals or groups
- Leaving home / care without explanation

- Suspicion of physical assault / unexplained injuries
- Parental concerns
- Carrying weapons
- Significant decline in school results / performance
- Gang association or isolation from peers or social networks
- Self-harm or significant changes in emotional wellbeing

If you are concerned about a child you should follow your Local Safeguarding Children Partnership's procedures. If you believe a child is at immediate risk of harm you should contact the police. The Local Safeguarding Children Partnership provides a criminal / child exploitation screening tool to support your assessment and referral.

The DfE Guidance Criminal Exploitation of Children and Vulnerable Adults: County Lines Guidance provides a useful flowchart to guide your thinking.

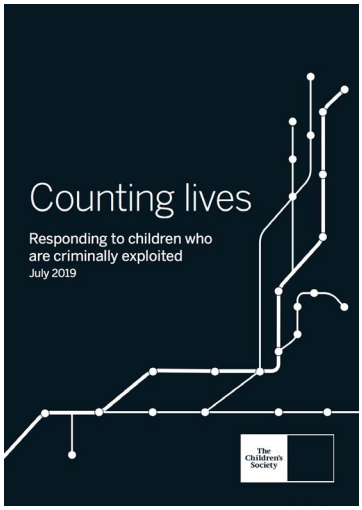
NSPCC Childline and Mind ED can be sources of support for young people.

Counting Lives; Responding to children who are criminally exploited

In July 2019 the Children's Society published a report into children who are criminally exploited. The full report can be found here: **www.childrenssociety.org.uk/sites/default/files/counting-lives-report.pdf** Some of the key findings that all staff should be aware of include:

The grooming and exploitation of children

- The criminal exploitation of children can take many forms. It can include children being forced to work in cannabis factories, being coerced into moving drugs or money across the country, forced to shoplift or pickpocket, or to threaten other young people
- Practitioners and police report increasing awareness of children being exploited through the 'county lines' model. This typically describes the distribution of drugs around the country through the use of dedicated mobile phone 'lines', though the model is not static
- Children can be targeted for exploitation through face-to-face interactions or online through social media and other platforms. Criminal groups can hijack popular culture such as music videos to entice young people into criminal exploitation
- Any child can be at risk of exploitation but some vulnerabilities place children at greater risk. These include: growing up in poverty, having learning difficulties, being excluded from school or being a looked after child
- Going missing from home or care is an indicator of potential exploitation. Children in care go missing more frequently than other children and are more likely to be found outside of the boundaries of their home Local Authority
- Older adolescents are more likely to be recorded as having been criminally exploited but there is evidence that primary school age children – as young as seven – are targeted. There can be a lack of recognition of criminal exploitation affecting younger children and so the opportunity to protect children under the age of 10 can be missed.
- Gender, age, ethnicity and background can all affect the way in which professionals do or do not recognise young people as victims, or at risk, of criminal exploitation. This can then affect the response they receive
- Criminal exploitation often happens alongside sexual or other forms of exploitation



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Serious Youth Violence

Serious Youth Violence is defined by the **Home Office Assessment of Policing and Community Safety** (APACS) as *"any offence of most serious violence or weapon enabled crime, where the victim is aged 1-19"* (i.e. murder, manslaughter, rape, wounding with intent and causing grievous bodily harm. *"Youth violence"* is defined in the same way but also includes assault with injury offences.

While only a small percentage of children and young people join gangs, some studies suggest that homicide and aggravated assault are three times more likely to be committed by gang members. Recent years have seen increasing national and local concern about the use of firearms and other weapons as a means of committing crime.

The number of children and young people who lose their lives to violence now is higher than it was 10 years ago. So is the number admitted to hospital for knife assaults. In 2022-23, in England and Wales, 42 young people aged 16 to 19 were victims of homicide by a sharp object. In 2022-23 in England, there were 467 instances of children being treated in hospital for injuries caused by a knife or sharp object. This was a **47%** increase from 10 years earlier.

In 2023, the Youth Endowment Fund surveyed 7,500 children in England and Wales, finding that 1 in 4 either had been a victim of violence or had perpetrated violence themselves. Almost half (**47%**) had witnessed violence in the last 12 months and **60%** had seen 'real world' violent acts on social media.

It is important to recognise that youth violence, serious or otherwise, may be a function of gang activity. However, it could equally represent the behaviour of a child acting individually in response to his or her particular history and circumstances. Most children and young people do not become violent overnight. Their behaviour often represents many years of (increasingly) challenging behaviours.

All staff should be aware of the range of risk factors which increase the likelihood of involvement in serious violence crimes, such as:

- Increased absence from school;
- A change in friendships or relationships with older individuals or groups;
- A significant decline in performance;
- Signs of self-harm or a significant change in wellbeing; or
- Signs of assault or unexplained injuries.

In addition, unexplained gifts or new possessions could also indicate that children have been approached by, or are involved with, individuals associated with criminal networks or gangs and may be at risk of being exploited.

The likelihood of involvement in serious violence may be increased by factors such as:

- Being male
- Ethnicity
- Having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), in particular those who are neurodivergent
- Having been frequently absent or permanently excluded from school
- Having experienced adverse childhood experiences
- Having been involved in offending, such as theft or robbery.

Staff should also be aware that violence can often peak in the hours just before or just after school, when pupils are travelling to and from school and if pupils are on a reduced or part time timetable. These times can be particularly risky for young people involved in serious violence, therefore schools must take this into account and respond appropriately.

Where a child is affected by gang activity or serious youth violence, the risk or potential risk of harm to the child may be as a victim, perpetrator or both.

Children and young people could be at risk of harm from:

- Their peers; or
- Gang-involved or affected adults in their household (including because their parent cannot protect them).

Risk factors for involvement in gangs/serious youth violence can also include living in areas with high levels of social and economic exclusion; family gang involvement, and exposure to alcohol, drugs, violence and weapons.

Where there are concerns, staff should share these with the safeguarding team without delay. The presenting behaviours or disclosure should be considered and assessed in the context of whatever information is known or can be gathered from the child about the risk factors which contribute to the child's vulnerability to gang involvement and serious youth violence. The Designated Safeguarding Lead will use the local Level of Need framework to determine the next steps and will make referrals as appropriate to multi-agency partners.

If concerns are raised about harm from gang activity and serious youth violence, there should also be a consideration of the possible risk to members of the child's family and others within the community. Professionals should be alert to the fact that other children and young people could be identified as being at risk of harm from gang involvement/activity and will then need to be responded to as a child in need of services or protection.

Additional information and advice can be found in the Home Office's **Serious Violence Duty; Preventing and reducing serious violence**, **Preventing youth violence and gang involvement** and **Criminal exploitation of children and vulnerable adults: county lines** guidance or on the local safeguarding children partnership website.

Use of Language

Professionals should be mindful of the language they use when describing a child or children's behaviour to ensure that there is no blame being placed with a child who is being abused and / or exploited. Over time it has been common to hear phrases or terminology which indicate that a child who is being abused is somehow complicit in the abuse itself.

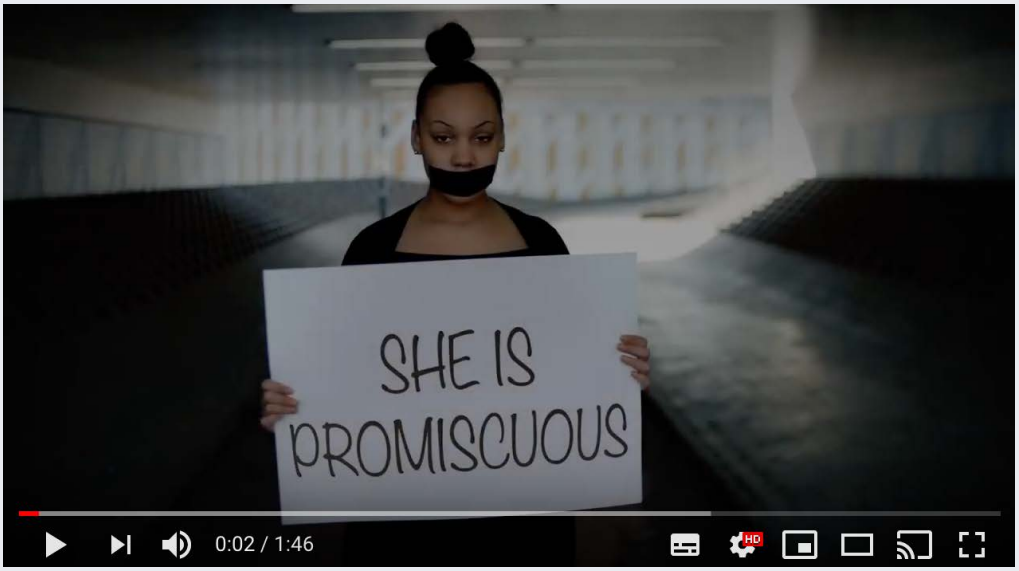
The table below taken from the document "Appropriate Language: Child sexual and / or criminal exploitation. Guidance for Professionals", produced by The Children's Society, Victim Support, and National Police Chief's Council, gives some examples of alternative language and phrases that colleagues could use when attempting to describe the way in which a child is presenting:

Inappropriate Term	Suggested Alternatives
Putting themselves at risk *This implies that the child is responsible for the risks presented by the perpetrator and that they are able to make free and informed choices.*	• The child may have been groomed • The child is at an increased vulnerability to being abused / exploited • A perpetrator may exploit the child's increased vulnerability • The child is not in a protective environment • The situation could reduce the child's safety • The location is dangerous to children • The location / situation could increase a perpetrators opportunity to abuse them • It is unclear whether the child is under duress to go missing • There are concerns that the child may be being sexually abused • It is unclear why the child is getting into cars • There are concerns that there is a power imbalance forcing the child to act in this way • There are concerns regarding other's influences on the child
Sexual activity with… *This implies consensual sexual activity has taken place. If it occurs within an abusive or exploitative context this term is not appropriate.*	• The child has been sexually abused • The child has been raped • There are reports of sexual abuse • The child has described sexual activity, however concerns exist that the child may have been groomed / coerced
Sexually active since (age under 13) *A child under 13 cannot consent to sex and is therefore being abused. This should be reflected in the language used.*	• The child has been raped • The child has been / may have been sexually abused • Concerns exist that the child may have been coerced, exploited or sexually abused
Has been contacting adult males / females via phone or internet *This implies that the child or young person is responsible for the communication and does not reflect the abusive or exploitative context.*	• Adult males / females may have been contacting the child • The child may have been groomed • There are concerns that the adult is facilitating communication with a child • The child is vulnerable to online perpetrators • There are concerns that others may be using online technology to access or abuse the child • Adults appear to be using a range of methods to communicate with the child

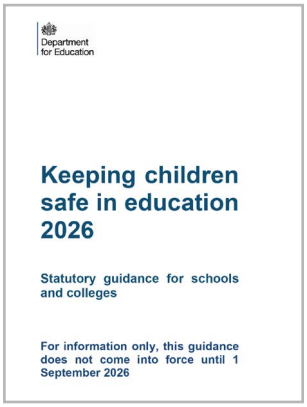
Inappropriate Term	Suggested Alternatives
Offering him / her drugs seemingly in return for sex *This implies that the child or young person is responsible for the abuse and has the capacity to make a free and informed choice. It does not recognise the abusive or exploitative context.*	• The child is being sexually exploited • There are concerns that the child has been raped • Perpetrators are sexually abusing the child • The child is being sexually abused • The child's vulnerability to drug use is used by others to abuse them • The perpetrators have a hold over the child due to the fact that they are drug dependent
In a relationship with… *This implies that the child or young person is in a consensual relationship and does not reflect the abusive or exploitative context.*	• The young person says that they are in a relationship with a person and there are concerns about that person's age, the imbalance of power, exploitation and / or offending • The young person has been / is being groomed, exploited and controlled
Involved in CSE *This implies there is a level of choice regarding the child being abused. A five year old would never be referred to as being involved in sexual abuse for the same reasons.*	• The child is vulnerable to being sexually exploited • The child is being sexually exploited
Promiscuous *This implies consensual sexual activity has taken place. Promiscuous is a judgemental term which stereotypes and labels people. It isn't appropriate in any context when discussing children and young people, but particularly if it occurs within an abusive or exploitative context.*	• The child is vulnerable to being sexually exploited • The child is being sexually exploited
Prostituting themselves *This implies that the child or young person is responsible for the abuse and has the capacity to make a free and informed choice. It does not recognise the abusive or exploitative context.* *Changes in legislation have meant that child prostitution is no longer an acceptable term and should never be used.*	• The child is vulnerable to being sexually exploited • The child is being sexually exploited
Boyfriend / Girlfriend *This implies that the child or young person is in a consensual relationship and does not reflect the abusive or exploitative context.* *Children have been challenged in court with practitioner's recordings where a practitioner has referred to the perpetrator as the child's boyfriend or girlfriend*.	• The young person says that they are in a relationship with a person and there are concerns about that person's age, the imbalance of power, exploitation and / or offending • The young person has been / is being groomed, exploited and controlled
Drug running, he / she is drug running *This implies that the child or young person is responsible for the exploitation and has the capacity to make a free and informed choice. It does not recognise the abusive or exploitative context.*	• Child criminal exploitation (CCE) • The child is being criminally exploited • The child is being trafficked for the purpose of criminal exploitation

Inappropriate Term	Suggested Alternatives
Recruit / run / work *This implies that the child or young person is responsible for the exploitation and has the capacity to make a free and informed choice. It does not recognise the abusive or exploitative context.*	• The child is being criminally exploited
He / she is choosing this lifestyle *This implies that the child or young person is responsible for the exploitation and has the capacity to make a free and informed choice. It does not recognise the abusive or exploitative context.*	• The child is being criminally exploited • The child is being sexually exploited
Spending time / associating with "elders" *This implies that the child or young person is responsible for the exploitation and has the capacity to make a free and informed choice. It does not recognise the abusive or exploitative context.*	• The young person says that they are friends with a person and there are concerns about that person's age, the imbalance of power, exploitation, offending • The young person has been groomed, exploited, controlled Note: If the elder is under the age of 18 years old, this will need to be considered using child protection processes.
Offering him / her drugs seemingly in return for sex or to run drugs *This implies that the child or young person is responsible for the exploitation and has the capacity to make a free and informed choice. It does not recognise the abusive or exploitative context.*	• The child is being sexually / criminally exploited • The child is being criminally exploited through drug debt • There are concerns that the child has been raped as they do not have the freedom or capacity to consent • Perpetrators are sexually abusing the child • The child is being sexually abused • The child's vulnerability regarding drug use is being used by others to abuse them • The perpetrators have a hold over the child by the fact that they have a drug dependency

The short video below (produced by the Waltham Forest Youth Independent Advisory Group, CSE Lead, Youth and Engagement Officer and Safer London) also gives some insight into why our choice of language is so important to victims of abuse: https://vimeo.com/159372082



Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment Between Children



The DfE Guidance in relation to Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment is contained, in full, in Part 5 of 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' and should be read in full by governing bodies, headteachers, leadership teams, the Designated Safeguarding Lead, the safeguarding team and key pastoral staff.

The guidance states that Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB) can occur between two or more children of any age and sex, from primary through to secondary stage and into college. It can occur also through a group of children towards a single child or towards another group of children. HSB exists on a continuum and may escalate into sexual harassment or sexual violence, it can occur online or face-to-face (both physically and verbally) and is never acceptable.

HSB can be experienced both online and face-to-face (both physically and verbally). It stresses that whilst any report of sexual violence or sexual harassment should be taken seriously, staff should be aware it is more likely that girls will be the victims of sexual violence and sexual harassment and more likely that it will be perpetrated by boys. Children with special educational needs and disabilities are also three times more likely to be abused than their peers. LGBT children can also be targeted by their peers.

The umbrella term 'harmful sexual behaviour' (HSB) is widely used in child protection and applies to behaviour occurring online, face-to-face, or both. HSB should always be considered within a child protection context. Children's sexual behaviour exists on a wide continuum, ranging from normal and developmentally expected to inappropriate, problematic, abusive or violent. Behaviour that is problematic, abusive or violent is developmentally inappropriate and may cause developmental damage. Early intervention in inappropriate behaviour such as misogyny can help to prevent escalation to more serious abuse such as sexual harassment and sexual violence. Children who display HSB have often experienced their own abuse and trauma. It is important that they are offered appropriate support.

All staff should maintain an attitude of "it could happen here", and should act on the assumption that it is happening, even if there are no direct reports. It is essential that all staff and volunteers have an understanding of what sexual violence and sexual harassment might look like and what to do if they have a concern or receive a report.

It also sets out that all victims should be reassured and taken seriously, and that they will be supported and kept safe. It is made clear that a victim should never be made to think that they are creating a problem by reporting sexual violence or harassment, and they should never be made to feel ashamed for making a report.

Schools and colleges must be aware of the importance of:

- Making clear that there is a zero-tolerance approach to sexual violence and sexual harassment, that it is never acceptable, and it will not be tolerated. It should never be passed off as "banter", "just having a laugh", "a part of growing up" or "boys being boys". Failure to do so can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviour, misogyny, an unsafe environment and in worst case scenarios, a culture that normalises abuse, leading to children accepting it as normal and not coming forward to report it,
- Recognising, acknowledging, and understanding the scale of HSB, sexual harassment and sexual violence and that even if there are no reports it does not mean it is not happening, it may be the case that it is just not being reported,

- Recognising the escalatory nature of misogyny and the benefits of early identification to support their approach to minimising the risk of HSB, sexual harassment and sexual violence, challenging behaviours, potentially criminal in nature, such as grabbing bottoms, breasts and genitalia, pulling down trousers, flicking bras and lifting.

Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) are three times more likely to be abused than their peers. Additional barriers can sometimes exist when recognising abuse in SEND children, which can include:

- Assumptions that indicators of possible abuse such as behaviour, mood and injury relate to the child's disability without further exploration
- The potential for children with SEND being disproportionately impacted by behaviours such as bullying and harassment, without outwardly showing any signs; and
- Communication barriers and difficulties overcoming these barriers.

Children who are lesbian, gay, bi, or trans (LGBT) can be targeted by their peers. In some cases, a child who is perceived by their peers to be LGBT (whether they are or not) can be just as vulnerable as children who identify as LGBT.

Schools should consider how they are hearing the voice of these vulnerable students together with all students.

The Guidance also reminds schools of their legal responsibilities, including their obligations under the **Human Rights Act 1998** and **Equality Act 2010**. It reminds schools that they should have procedures in place to keep children safe and promote their welfare. Schools should also have a behaviour policy and measures in place to prevent all forms of bullying (including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying). In addition, it is mandatory for all schools to teach "**Relationships education, relationship and sex education (RSE) and health education**".

Being subjected to sexual violence or sexual harassment may breach the individual's Human Rights, depending on the nature of the conduct and the circumstances.

The Guidance sets out a whole-school approach to preventing child-on-child HSB, sexual violence and sexual harassment. The best responses to child HSB, sexual violence and harassment are those which take a whole school or college approach to safeguarding and child protection. This means involving everyone in the school or college, including the governing body or proprietor, all the staff, children, adult students and parents and carers. Safeguarding and child protection should be a recurrent theme running through policies and procedures. The schools or college's approach to sexual violence and sexual harassment should reflect and be part of the broader approach to safeguarding. Ultimately, all systems, processes and policies should operate with the best interests of the child at their heart.

The school's safeguarding procedures with regards to HSB, sexual violence and harassment must be transparent, clear and easy to understand for staff, pupils, parents and carers.

School should have a system in place for children to confidently report abuse, sexual violence and sexual harassment knowing that their concerns will be treated seriously, and that they can safely express their views and give feedback. These systems should be well promoted amongst the children, easily understood and easily accessible.

They highlight that the most effective preventative education programme will be through a whole school approach that prepares pupils for life in modern Britain. The school will have a clear set of values and standards, and these will be upheld and demonstrated throughout all aspects of school life.

This will be underpinned by the school's behaviour policy and pastoral support system, and by a planned programme of evidence-based content delivered through the whole curriculum.

Such a programme should be developed to be age and stage of development appropriate (especially when considering SEND children and their cognitive understanding), and may tackle such issues as:

- Healthy and respectful relationships;
- What respectful behaviours look like;
- Consent;
- Stereotyping, equality;
- Body confidence and self-esteem;
- Prejudiced behaviour;
- That sexual violence and sexual harassment is always wrong; and
- Addressing cultures of sexual harassment

The guidance also provides advice for responding to reports of HSB, sexual violence and sexual harassment. It again reinforces that there should be clear systems in place for dealing with issues and reports of sexual violence and sexual harassment. It stresses that where schools do not recognise, acknowledge, or understand the scale of harassment and abuse and/or downplay some behaviours related to abuse it can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviour, an unsafe environment and in worst case scenarios, a culture that normalises abuse leading to children accepting it as normal and not coming forward to report it.

It acknowledges that reports of HSB, sexual violence and sexual harassment are likely to be complex, requiring difficult professional decisions to be made, often quickly and under pressure. Pre-planning, effective training and effective policies will provide schools and colleges with the foundation for a calm, considered and appropriate response to any report. It also stresses that abuse that occurs online or outside of the school should not be downplayed and should be treated equally as seriously.

The school's initial response to a report from a child is incredibly important. How a school responds can either encourage or undermine the confidence of future victims to report or come forwards.

It highlights that statutorily:

- A child under the age of 13 can never consent to any sexual activity
- The age of consent is 16
- Sexual intercourse without consent is rape
- Rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault are defined in law
- Creating and sharing sexual photos and videos of under-18s is illegal (often referred to as 'sexting')

The Designated Safeguarding Lead should support any decisions and any actions taken. The guidance goes on to set out how to manage a disclosure following the school's and local safeguarding children partnership's child protection procedures, including the risk assessment process. The resource provides some useful case studies and provides very good guidance for safeguarding and supporting the victim and also alleged perpetrator.

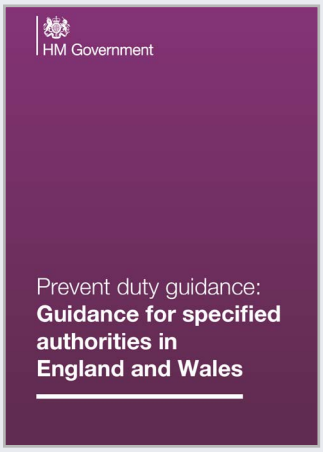
Schools should update their child protection policies to ensure it sets out the school's own procedures for reporting and responding to incidents.

In order to address potential issues of sexual harassment, organisations should also have reference to the UKCIS document "Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people".

This document provides clear advice and guidance regarding how schools should respond to issues of youth produced sexual imagery and gives practical examples of how to educate young people regarding this issue.



Extremism and Radicalisation



The expectation that schools can help to protect children from extremism and violent views is not a new one, however the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 places a duty upon Local Authorities and educational providers to *'have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism'*. The DfE has provided Statutory Guidance for schools and child care providers: 'The Prevent Duty' (updated 2023). This Guidance summarises the requirements on schools and childcare providers in terms of four general themes: risk assessment, working in partnership, staff training and IT policies.

What schools should do:

- Schools should take account of the four themes (risk assessment, working in partnership, staff training and IT policies)
- Schools are not expected to have an additional policy as the school's child protection policy will cover the responsibilities of schools

Quick check:

- Do you appropriately vet guest speakers to ensure they don't offer extremist views?
- Has your Designated Safeguarding Lead completed enhanced prevent awareness training?
- Does your school IT system prevent children from accessing inappropriate sites and detect inappropriate use (filtering and monitoring)? Is it compliant with the CITRU list?
- Do your child protection and safeguarding policies make reference to your responsibilities under the **Prevent Duty**?
- Do you have clear procedures in place for protecting children at risk of radicalisation? (Your Designated Safeguarding Lead and safeguarding team understand how to refer concerns to children's services who may then draw upon the services of police and the channel programme)
- Can your staff recognise children at risk and know how to support them including when to make a referral?
- Have your staff had additional guidance or training?
- Does your school support children to stay safe on-line in school and outside?
- Does your PSHE curriculum provide pupils with the time to explore, in a safe environment, sensitive or controversial issues and help them to recognise and manage risk, make safer choices and recognise when pressure from others threatens their personal safety and wellbeing?
- Does your school take account of the DfE Guidance, '**Promoting fundamental British values as part of SMSC in schools**' (DfE 2014)?
- Do you build children's resilience to radicalisation?

Children who may be at risk of extremism and radicalisation:

There is no single profile of a young person, however the following may lead to a child becoming involved in extremism and radicalisation:

- The child may experience social isolation
- They may be searching for answers to questions about identity, faith and belonging
- They may be distanced from their cultural / religious heritage and experiences
- They may experience local community tensions
- They may be vulnerable because of their own low self-esteem
- They may have experienced bereavement or loss

- They may feel aggrieved by experiences of racism, discrimination or government policy
- They may have special educational needs
- They may have perceptions of injustice
- They may have little understanding of the consequences of their actions or little awareness of the motivations of others
- They may experience a feeling of failure
- They may be driven by a need for identity, social network and support
- They may be driven by a desire for adventure, excitement or a change in their status

Possible indicators that a child may be becoming radicalised:

- Use of inappropriate language
- Adopting a 'them and us' approach
- Possessing extremist literature
- Significant changes in appearance and / or behaviour
- Identifying with a group or ideology
- Accessing extremist websites and social networking sites
- Advocating violence to resolve political and social situations
- Greater degree of personal social isolation, alongside greater association with known extremists
- Making contact with known extremist recruiters
- Seeking to recruit others to their extremist ideology
- Drawing pictures or symbols, including in their exercise books
- Unwilling to engage in class activities
- Displaying racist and homophobic language
- Changes in dress, tattoos, badges on clothing
- Change in vocabulary
- Prone to outbursts
- Asking unusual / concerning questions
- Other changes in behaviour associated with neglect and a change in someone's emotional wellbeing

Referral Mechanism

School staff and Designated Safeguarding Leads should follow the normal safeguarding procedures and act to protect children who are immediately at risk by ringing the Police. Other children will need to be referred to Children's Services. Following this a referral may need to be made to the Channel Programme. In addition, schools can seek advice from their local Prevent and Channel Coordinators:

LIVERPOOL:

- **Liverpool City Council Prevent Coordinator,** Alison Burnett, 0151 233 7018, 07394559106, alison.burnett@Liverpool.gov.uk
- **Liverpool Education Prevent Officer,** Joanna Fitzsimmons, 0151 233 7018, 07515 332702 Joanna.fitzsimmons@Liverpool.gov.uk
- **Liverpool Prevent Officer,** Stephanie Kelly, 0151 233 7018, stephanie.kelly@liverpool.gov.uk, 07542228121
- **Channel Supervisor** Jenna Miller, 07784031134, jenna.miller@liverpool.gov.uk

KNOWSLEY:

- **Chair of Channel Panel, Lindsey Heaton,** 07766780354
- **Channel Coordinator, Sefton, Knowsley and St Helens,** Claire Wright, 07934 559107 claire.wright@liverpool.gov.uk

SEFTON:

- **Sefton Council Prevent Lead,** Andrea Watts, 0151 934 2030, andrea.watts@sefton.gov.uk
- **Channel Coordinator, Sefton, Knowsley and St Helens,** Claire Wright, 07934 559107 claire.wright@liverpool.gov.uk

ST HELENS:

- **Prevent Training & Development Officer,** Georgia Lee, 07920710809, GeorgiaLee@sthelens.gov.uk
- **Channel Coordinator, Sefton, Knowsley and St Helens,** Claire Wright, 07934 559107 claire.wright@liverpool.gov.uk

WARRINGTON:

- **Warrington Council Prevent Lead,** Theresa Whitfield, twhitfield@warrington.gov.uk
- **Channel Coordinator, Cheshire Authorities,** Bev Hurst, 07934 559108, bev.hurst@liverpool.gov.uk

WIGAN:

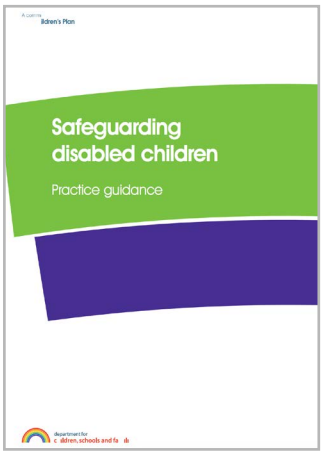
- **Manchester Police Prevent Coordinator,** Samiya Butt 0161 234 1489, s.butt@manchester.gov.uk
- **Prevent Lead,** Sarah Owen 0161 856 7102, Sarah.Owen@wigan.gov.uk
- **Prevent Lead,** Paul Whitemoss 01942 487691, p.whitemoss@wigan.gov.uk

WIRRAL:

- **Wirral Council Prevent Lead,** Bob Little, bob.little@wirral.gov.uk
- **Channel Coordinator, Liverpool and Wirral,** Jenna Miller, 07784031134, jenna.miller@liverpool.gov.uk

Safeguarding Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

The DfE offer the following reasons, as examples, as to why disabled children are more vulnerable to abuse:



- Many disabled children are at an increased likelihood of being socially isolated, with fewer outside contacts than non-disabled children
- Their dependency on parents and carers for practical assistance in daily living, including intimate personal care, increases their risk of exposure to abusive behaviour
- They have an impaired capacity to resist or avoid abuse
- They may have speech, language and communication needs which may make it difficult to tell others what is happening
- They often do not have access to someone they can trust to disclose that they have been abused
- They are especially vulnerable to bullying and intimidation
- Looked after disabled children are not only vulnerable to the same factors that exist for all children living away from home, but are particularly susceptible to possible abuse because of their additional dependency on residential and hospital staff for day-to-day physical care needs

Examples of harm or indicators of harm might include:

- A bruise in a site that might not be of concern on an ambulant child, such as the shin, might be of concern on a non-mobile child
- Not getting enough help with feeding, leading to malnourishment
- Poor toileting arrangements
- Lack of stimulation
- Unjustified and / or excessive use of restraint
- Rough handling, ill-fitting equipment, extreme behaviour modification e.g. deprivation of liquid, medication, food or clothing
- Unwillingness to try to learn a child's means of communication
- Misappropriation of a child's finances
- Invasive procedures which are unnecessary or are carried out against the child's will

Neglect

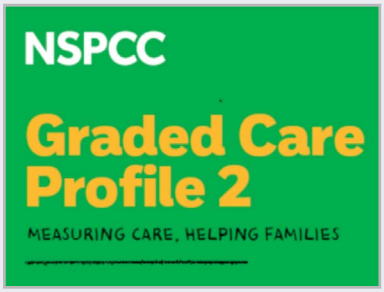
Further resources are available on the DfE, LSCP and NSPCC websites. Colleagues who are part of the school's safeguarding team should consider undertaking the Graded Care Profile 2 Tool NSPCC training provided by your LSCP.

Child neglect in 2011 - An annual review by Action for Children in partnership with the University of Stirling'

'Neglect is extremely damaging to children in the short and long term. The experience of neglect affects physical, cognitive and emotional development, friendships, behaviour and opportunities. For many people, the most obvious form of neglect is poor physical care. It is certainly very damaging for children's health and development to be inadequately fed and clothed. But neglect can also take many other forms, not all of them accompanied by the obvious physical signs of being severely under- or over-weight, dirty and scruffy.'

Some signs, symptoms and indicators of neglect:

- Being left alone in the house or in the streets for long periods of time
- Lack of parental support for school attendance
- Being ignored when distressed, or even when excited or happy
- Lack of proper healthcare when required
- Having no opportunity to have fun with their parents or with other children
- Speech and language delay
- Missed / failed development checks
- Learning difficulties or poor educational progress
- Poor attendance, including nursery
- General development delay
- Young children picked up late from nursery / school
- Poorly supervised both within and outside the home, enabling the child to engage in risk taking behaviour
- Caring for young siblings
- Frequent accidents or minor injuries / bruising
- Poor dental care
- Recurrent infections, nappy rash, head lice, skin conditions
- Not registered with a GP or children's centre
- Delay in seeking medical help, missing medical appointments, inadequate immunisations
- Not agreeing to assessments or referrals for the child's behaviour or mental health
- Failure to follow up a child's hearing or sight problems
- Weight loss or gain, gross obesity
- Lack of height gain
- Excessively hungry, hoarding or stealing food, feeding problems
- Inadequate unbalanced diet
- Inappropriately dressed for the weather, inappropriate clothes for age, gender or size
- The child or their clothes are unclean or smell
- Lack of parental stimulation
- Poor parental attachment to the child
- Parent ignores child's emotional needs and fails to provide appropriate stimulation
- Lack of age appropriate boundaries set for the child
- Child has behavioural difficulties, under stimulation, cries excessively, seeks attention or is withdrawn
- Poor concentration or finds it difficult to settle in
- Destructive or aggressive
- Child socially isolated from peers, absence of friends



Graded Care Profile 2 Neglect Assessment Tool
Many Local Authorities have adopted the NSPCC Graded Care Profile 2 assessment tool.

The NSPCC Graded Care Profile 2 helps professionals right across the whole continuum of need measure the quality of care given to children where there are concerns that they may be being neglected.

Professionals grade aspects of family life on a scale of 1 to 5. The areas cover:

A. Physical Care
B. Safety
C. Emotional Care (nature of attachment)
D. Developmental Care

Each area is further sub-divided into components:

A Physical Care	B Safety	C Emotional Care	D Developmental Care
A1 Nutrition	B1 In carer's presence	C1 Carer	D1 Age 0-2
A2 Housing	B2 In carer's absence	C2 Mutual engagement	D1 Age 2-5
A3 Clothing			D1 Age 5+
A4 Hygiene			D2 Approval
A5 Health			D3 Disapproval
			D4 Acceptance

The assessment tool identifies what the family is doing well and where improvements need to be made to improve the level of care children receive. It gives greater clarity as to what support the family needs and where interventions should be targeted. It allows professionals to remain outcome focussed so the children's needs are met.

Whilst many professionals have undertaken the NSPCC Graded Care Profile 2, it is vital that this training translates into activity and more assessments being undertaken. To be licenced to use the tool, practitioners must attend the training.

The majority of referrals regarding neglect to statutory services (CIN or CP), should be accompanied by a completed Graded Care Profile 2.

Visit your local safeguarding children partnership website to see what is offered locally.

Domestic Abuse

What is domestic abuse?
Domestic violence and abuse is widespread and can occur across the whole of society regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, religion, social class, age, income or where a person lives. All forms of domestic abuse come from the abuser's desire for power and control over other family members or intimate partners. Staff who work with children and families should be alert to the relationship between domestic abuse and the abuse and neglect of children and should be aware that experiencing domestic abuse (directly or indirectly) constitutes harm to a child and young person.

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 introduced a statutory definition of Domestic Abuse:

The behaviour of a person ("A") towards another person ("B") is "domestic abuse" if:
a. A and B are each aged 16 or over and are "personally connected" to each other,
b. And the behaviour is abusive.

Behaviour is "abusive" if it consists of any of the following:
a. Physical or sexual abuse
b. Violent or threatening behaviour
c. Controlling or coercive behaviour
d. Economic abuse
e. Psychological, emotional or other abuse and it does not matter whether the behaviour consists of a single incident or a course of conduct.

"Economic abuse" means any behaviour that has a substantial adverse effect on B's ability to:
a. Acquire, use or maintain money or other property, or
b. Obtain goods or services

For the purposes of this Act, A's behaviour may be behaviour "towards" B despite the fact that it consists of conduct directed at another person (for example, B's child).

It also specifies the following in relation to children as victims of domestic abuse:

Any reference in this Act to a victim of domestic abuse includes a reference to a child who:
a. Sees or hears, or experiences the effect of, the abuse, and
b. Is related to A or B.

A child is related to a person for the purposes of subsection (2) if:
a. The person is a parent of, or has parental responsibility for, the child, or
b. The child and the person are relatives.

In this section:
- "Child" means person under the age of 18 years
- "Parental responsibility" has the same meaning as in the Children Act 1989 (see section 3 of that Act)
- "Relative" has the meaning given by section 63(1) of the Family Law Act 1996

The impact of Domestic Abuse on children

Children are individuals and will respond to witnessing abuse in different ways. Where there are children in the family, **90%** are in the same or adjoining room when domestic violence is taking place. Some of the possible effects of witnessing domestic abuse are listed below:

- They may become anxious or depressed
- They may have difficulty sleeping
- They have nightmares or flashbacks
- They can be easily startled
- They may complain of physical symptoms such as tummy aches and may start to wet their bed
- They may have temper tantrums and problems with school
- They may behave as though they are much younger than they are
- They may become aggressive or they may internalise their distress and withdraw from other people
- They may have a lowered sense of self-worth
- Older children may begin to play truant, start to use alcohol or drugs, begin to self-harm by taking overdoses or cutting themselves or have an eating disorder

Royal College of Psychiatrists 2004

Children may also feel angry, guilty, insecure, alone, frightened, powerless or confused. They may have ambivalent feelings towards both the abuser and the non-abusing parent.

Research by Doctor Eamon McCrory PTSD of University College London, found that:

- The psychological impact of living with domestic abuse is no smaller than the impact of being physically abused
- Children often develop anxiety, depression, aggression and even post-traumatic stress disorder as a consequence of living with domestic abuse
- Approximately two thirds of child witnesses show more emotional or behavioural problems than the average child

Operation Encompass

Operation Encompass is an initiative designed to safeguard and support children and young people who have been involved in a domestic abuse incident. Following such an incident, children will often arrive at school distressed, upset and unprepared. Operation Encompass aims to ensure that appropriate school staff are made aware early enough to support children and young people in a way that means they feel safe and included. Schools must identify a named Key Adult(s) who is responsible for receiving the information from the Police, and then using this to determine the most appropriate response for the child. All Key Adults should undertake the online Key Adult training accessed free from the Operation Encompass website. At the time of writing there are 33 of the 43 police forces in England and Wales who have introduced Operation Encompass.

Schools across Merseyside receive Operation Encompass notifications via email throughout the year, including during weekends and the holiday periods. Each school should ensure that they have a system in place for appropriately responding to each email notification. Should a school receive a notification for a pupil who is not on roll at their setting, they should forward the email to **Operation.Encompass@merseyside.police.uk** advising that the child does not attend the setting.

MARAC

MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference) is a professionals meeting where information in relation to individuals suffering from Domestic Abuse (who have been assessed at high risk of further violence and abuse) is shared. Discussion and problem solving leads to the development of a multi-agency action plan to reduce risk and increase safety for the victims and children. Perpetrators are also discussed at these meetings with the aim of reducing the impact of abuse.

MARAC meetings are chaired and minuted by the local Police force. Victims do not attend the meeting, but are represented by an Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA). The IDVA is responsible for ensuring that the victims voice is heard at meetings, they are often the lead professional for victim work and they support and advocate for victims through complex systems and practices. Over twenty organisations can be represented at MARAC. Each organisation has a MARAC representative who is responsible for updating their internal IT system to share risks and actions from MARAC so that any colleagues working with the family have access to information about actions offered to increase safety.

Different Local Authority areas will have different arrangements for the frequency of MARAC meetings, and how information is shared with the conference by schools. Please ensure you are familiar with your own Local Authority's procedures.

Young Carers

A young carer is defined in law as:

As a 'person under 18 who provides or intends to provide care to another person'. This includes 'providing practical or emotional support' which is 'not under or by virtue of a contract or of voluntary work'. (Children and families Act 2014)

This information has kindly been provided by Barnardos Action with Young Carers.

Young carers are a vulnerable and disadvantaged group, specifically referenced in '**Keeping Children Safe in Education**'. As a result, these pupils will have specific needs to which schools must respond.

Possible indicators that a child / young person may be a young carer:

- Attendance
- Achievement
- Presentation - tired / hungry / unkempt
- Not taking part in extra-curricular activities
- Social skills
- Isolated / being bullied
- Homework / coursework
- Anxiety / constantly worried
- Behavioural problems
- Physical problems
- No obvious signs

Challenges and solutions for schools:

- Recognising the signs and sensitive identification
- Sharing information
- Supporting individual young carers
- Named Young Carers Lead
- All policies and protocols reflect young carers and the schools' responsibilities
- **Promoting children and young people's mental health and wellbeing** – A whole school or college approach
- Joint working with families and agencies – requesting statutory young carer's assessment via the Family Help and Young Carers Pathway

What young carers say makes a difference:

- Being identified as a young carer
- Acknowledgement of their caring role
- Help to get the right support
- Someone to talk to and feeling safe
- Flexibility
- Not having to re-tell their 'story'
- Information transferred when they move schools
- Information and an emergency plan
- Reassurance that their family is not going to be split up
- Support for parents and the whole family
- 16-19 Bursary

Supporting young carers will help schools to improve:

- Attendance
- Attainment
- Behaviour
- Contribution

Support in Liverpool:

Support for young carers is delivered by the commissioned service Barnardo's Action with Young Carers Service and Liverpool CAMHS. Their contact details are:

- Barnardos Action with Young Carers, 0151 228 4455, youngcarers.liverpool@barnardos.org.uk
- Liverpool CAMHS, www.liverpoolcamhs.com

Other Local Authority areas:

- Knowsley, Knowsley.YoungCarers@knowsley.gov.uk
- Sefton, www.sefton-carers.org.uk/index.php/young-carers-service
- St Helens, www.sthelensyoungcarers.org
- Warrington, www.wired.me.uk/Warrington-Carers-Centre.asp (Scroll down to young carers section)
- Wigan, https://wlcccarers.com
- Wirral, www.barnardos.org.uk/what-we-do/services/action-young-carers-wirral

Other National support services:

- The Childrens Society, https://bit.ly/2MFn1Gt
- Carers Trust, https://carers.org
- Barnardos, www.barnardos.org.uk/what-we-do/helping-families/young-carers

Further resources:

- A model Young Carers policy for schools can be found here: www.schoolimprovementliverpool.co.uk/Resources?op=doResourceSearch&keyword=young+carers&categoryID=
- A video to support colleagues' understanding of Young Carers can be accessed here: https://vimeo.com/252892714

Leaflets are available direct from Barnardos Action with Young Carers.

Private Fostering

What is private fostering?

Private fostering is the term used when someone who is not a parent or a 'close relative' (e.g. great aunt, cousin, mum's friend or a neighbour) is looking after a child or young person under the age of 16 (under 18 if they are disabled) for 28 days or more in their own home. It also covers children who stay at a residential school for more than two weeks of the school holidays. A relative is defined in the Children Act 1989 as a grandparent, uncle or aunt (whether by full-blood, half-blood or by marriage or civil partnership), sibling or step-parent.

Private fostering spans most age groups but it most commonly occurs for young people between the age of 13 and 16 years old. Research undertaken with young people who were privately fostered in 2015 by BAAF (British Association for Adoption and Fostering), identified the reasons for being privately fostered were as follows:

- **25%** said they became privately fostered because their parents were on holiday
- **17%** said they were privately fostered because their parents had long term health problems
- **17%** said their parents were working away from home
- **10%** said their parents were living somewhere else
- **9%** said they'd had a row with their mum and dad
- **5%** said their parents were in prison
- A further **34%** cited 'other' as the reason they became privately fostered

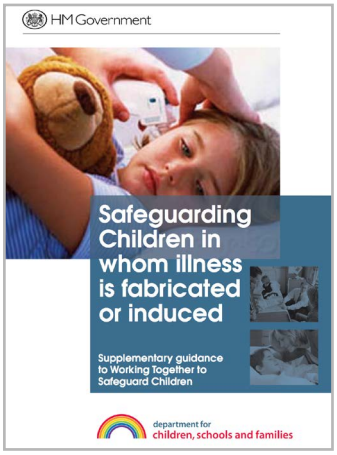
Common situations in which children are privately fostered can include:

- Children or young people who are sent to this country for education or health care by their birth parents from overseas
- Young people living with another family because they do not get on with their own family
- Children living with another family because their parents' study or work involves unsociable hours, which makes it difficult to use ordinary day care or after school care
- Children staying with another family because their parents have divorced or separated
- Children staying with another family because their parents have gone on an extended holiday
- Children staying with another family because their parent is in prison
- Children from overseas staying with a host family while attending school / language schools
- Children at independent boarding schools who do not return home for holidays
- Children attending sporting academy programmes where they live with a host family
- Children who are asylum seekers or refugees
- Trafficked children

In these situations the Local Authority's Children's Services department must be informed. Birth parents, private foster carers and persons who are arranging for a child to be privately fostered are required by law to notify Children's Services of the arrangement. However many people aren't aware of this requirement therefore if school staff identify that a child or young person is being privately fostered and they think local Children's Services are unaware, they must inform the safeguarding team who will then notify Children's Services or will support the parent / carer to do so.

Following the referral a social worker will visit the home to speak to the carer and the child to ensure the child is safe, carry out background checks and make sure support is being provided.

Fabricated or Induced Illness in a Child



All parents will demonstrate a range of behaviours in response to their child being unwell or being perceived as ill. Some may become more stressed or anxious than others. Their responses may relate to their perceptions of illness or to their expectations and / or experience of the medical profession. Some children may be fine and their parents simply need reassurance that they are not unwell, whilst others may experience continuing difficulty in recognising that there is nothing wrong and that their child is exhibiting normal childhood behaviours. Some parents can be helped to interpret and respond appropriately to their child's actions and behaviours, whilst others may continue to be anxious and / or are unable to change their beliefs. It is this latter group of parents who are more likely to present their children for medical examination although the child is healthy.

The fabrication or induction of illness in a child by a carer is a very rare form of abuse. Fabricated or induced illness has been previously known as "Munchausen's syndrome by proxy". Fabricated or induced illness can involve children of all ages, but the most severe cases are usually associated with children under the age of five. A carer will exhibit a range of behaviours when they wish to convince others that their child is ill. The key professional task is to distinguish between the very anxious carer who may be responding in a reasonable way to a very sick child, and those who are displaying abnormal behaviour.

There are three main ways of the carer fabricating or inducing illness in a child. These are not mutually exclusive and include:

- Fabrication of signs and symptoms. This may include fabrication of past medical history
- Fabrication of signs and symptoms and falsification of hospital charts and records, and specimens of bodily fluids. This may also include falsification of letters and documents
- Induction of illness by a variety of means

The DfE (formerly the Department for Children, Schools and Families) produced a guidance document 'Safeguarding children in whom illness is fabricated or induced' 2008. This should be read alongside 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' (2023) and your Local Safeguarding Children Partnership procedures when responding to a case of suspected fabricated or induced illness.

In line with this guidance, all agencies and professionals should:

- Be alert to potential indicators of illness being fabricated or induced in a child
- Be alert to the risk of harm which individual abusers, or potential abusers, may pose to children in whom illness is being fabricated or induced
- Share, and help to analyse information so that an informed assessment can be made of the child's needs and circumstances
- Contribute to whatever actions (including the cessation of unnecessary medical tests and treatments) and services are required to safeguard and promote the child's welfare
- Assist in providing relevant evidence in any criminal or civil proceedings

The following list is of behaviours which a carer may display which can be associated with fabricating or inducing illness in a child. **This list is not exhaustive and should be considered alongside an awareness of cultural behaviours and practices which can be mistakenly construed as abnormal behaviours:**

- Deliberately inducing symptoms in children by administering medication or other substances, or by interfering with the child's body so as to cause physical signs
- Interfering with treatments by overdosing with medication, not administering them or interfering with medical equipment
- Claiming the child has symptoms which are unverifiable unless observed directly, such as pain, frequency of passing urine, vomiting or fits. These claims result in unnecessary investigations and treatments which may cause secondary physical problems
- Exaggerating symptoms which are unverifiable unless observed directly, causing professionals to undertake investigations and treatments which may be invasive, are unnecessary and therefore are harmful and possibly dangerous
- Obtaining specialist treatments or equipment for children who do not require them
- Alleging psychological illness in a child

Concerns may arise about possible fabricated or induced illness when:

- Reported symptoms and signs found on examination are not explained by any medical condition from which the child may be suffering; or
- Physical examination and results of medical investigations do not explain reported symptoms and signs; or
- There is an inexplicably poor response to prescribed medication and other treatment; or
- New symptoms are reported on resolution of previous ones; or
- Reported symptoms and found signs are not seen to begin in the absence of the carer; or
- Over time the child is repeatedly presented with a range of signs and symptoms; or
- The child's normal, daily life activities are being curtailed, for example school attendance, beyond that which might be expected for any medical disorder from which the child is known to suffer

'Working Together to Safeguard Children' and 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' provide advice to schools on what they should do if they have reason to believe a child is being harmed or is at risk from harm. Through their day-to-day contact with children, school staff are particularly well placed to notice outward signs of harm. For pre-school children, staff have a key role to play in the identification and management of suspected cases of fabricated or induced illness.

This may occur when parents give a description of the child's ill health which does not accord with the observations of the organisation's staff. Although this discrepancy can do no more than raise concerns about possible significant harm, teachers, early years staff and all other staff should be alert to this possibility. As with all other forms of suspected abuse or neglect, staff should refer any child welfare concerns they have to the Designated Safeguarding Lead for the setting. If fabricated or induced illness is suspected, the Designated Safeguarding Lead may wish to discuss the case with the school nurse in order to gather a medical opinion.

Absences from school are common and occur for many reasons including legitimate medical and hospital appointments. If fabricated or induced illness by a carer is suspected, schools should attempt to verify the reasons for the child's absences. They should also consider whether reported illness is being used by the child and / or family, for example, to avoid specific lessons or because they may be being bullied.

Fabricated or induced illness is often, but not exclusively, associated with emotional abuse. There are a number of factors staff should be aware of that can indicate that a pupil may be at risk of harm.

Some of these factors can be:

- Frequent and unexplained absences from school, particularly from P.E. lessons
- Regular absences to keep a doctor's or a hospital appointment; or
- Refusal of permission for school medicals and / or other school based health checks; or
- Repeated claims by parent(s) that a child is frequently unwell and that he / she requires medical attention for symptoms which, when described, are vague in nature, difficult to diagnose and which staff have not themselves noticed e.g. Headaches, tummy aches, dizzy spells, frequent contact with opticians and / or dentists or referrals for second opinions

Schools and early years staff should, in particular, be alert to any significant change in the child's physical or emotional state, in their behaviour or failure to develop and draw these to the attention of the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

It is important that schools and school staff do not undertake their own enquiries if they have reason to suspect possible or actual harm. If there are suspicions that a carer may be fabricating or inducing illness in their child, schools should not discuss their concerns with them as it may increase the risk of harm, or give the carer the opportunity to dispose of any evidence of abuse. They should simply gather the relevant information and share their concerns with the appropriate agencies (children's social care and / or the police) in line with local procedures.

Contextual Safeguarding or Harm Outside the Home

Over time, '**Keeping Children Safe in Education**' and '**Working Together to Safeguard Children**' have introduced schools to the concept of contextual safeguarding and extra-familial harms. This can also be known as "harm outside the home".

Contextual safeguarding is an approach to understanding, and responding to, young people's experiences of significant harm beyond their families. Contextual safeguarding recognises that the different relationships that young people form in their neighbourhoods, schools and online can feature violence and abuse. Parents and carers have little influence over these contexts, and young people's experiences of abuse outside of the family home can undermine parent-child relationships. Child protection systems have traditionally focussed on the risk of abuse and neglect from inside the family unit (usually from a parent / carer or other trusted adult) and haven't always addressed the time that children spend outside of the home and the influence of peer groups on a young person's development and safety.

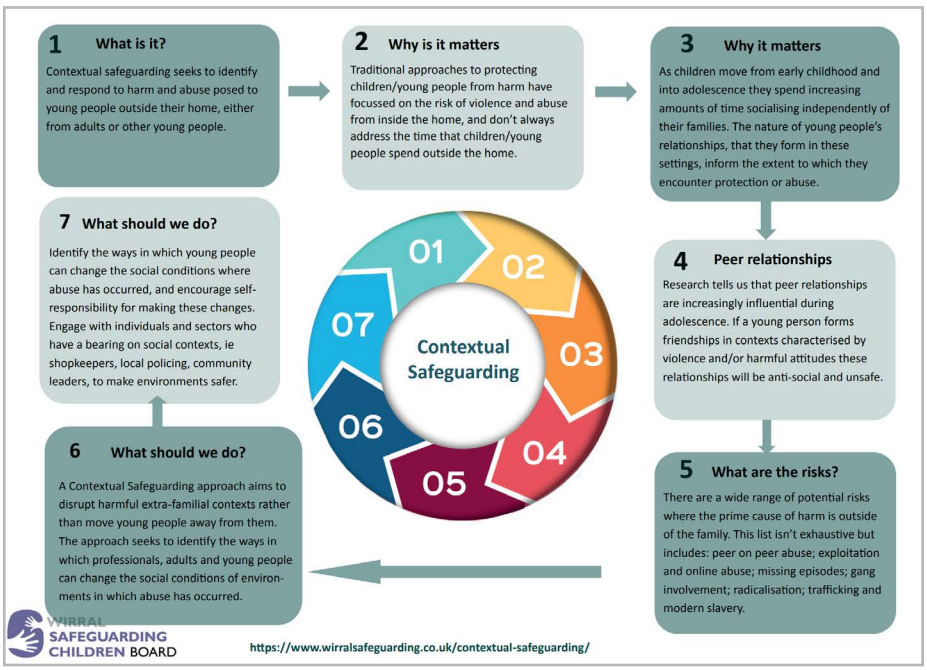
The model of contextual safeguarding was developed by Dr Carlene Firmin at the University of Bedfordshire and more information can be found on the contextual safeguarding website: www.contextualsafeguarding.org.uk

As children move from early childhood and into adolescence they spend increasing amounts of time socialising independently of their families and outside of their family homes. During this time the nature of schools and neighbourhoods, and the relationships that children form in these settings, inform the extent to which they encounter either protection or abuse. Evidence shows that, for example: from robbery on public transport, sexual violence in parks and gang related violence on streets, through to online bullying and harassment from peers and abuse within their intimate relationships, young people encounter significant harm in a range of settings beyond their families.

Research also informs us that peer relationships are increasingly influential during adolescence, setting social norms which inform young people's experiences, behaviours and choices and determine peer status. These relationships are, in turn, shaped by, and shape, the school, neighbourhood and online contexts in which they develop. So if young people socialise in safe and protective schools and communities they will be supported to develop safe and protective peer relationships. However, if they form friendships in situations characterised by violence and / or harmful attitudes these relationships may also be anti-social, unsafe or promote problematic social norms as a means of navigating, or surviving in, those spaces.

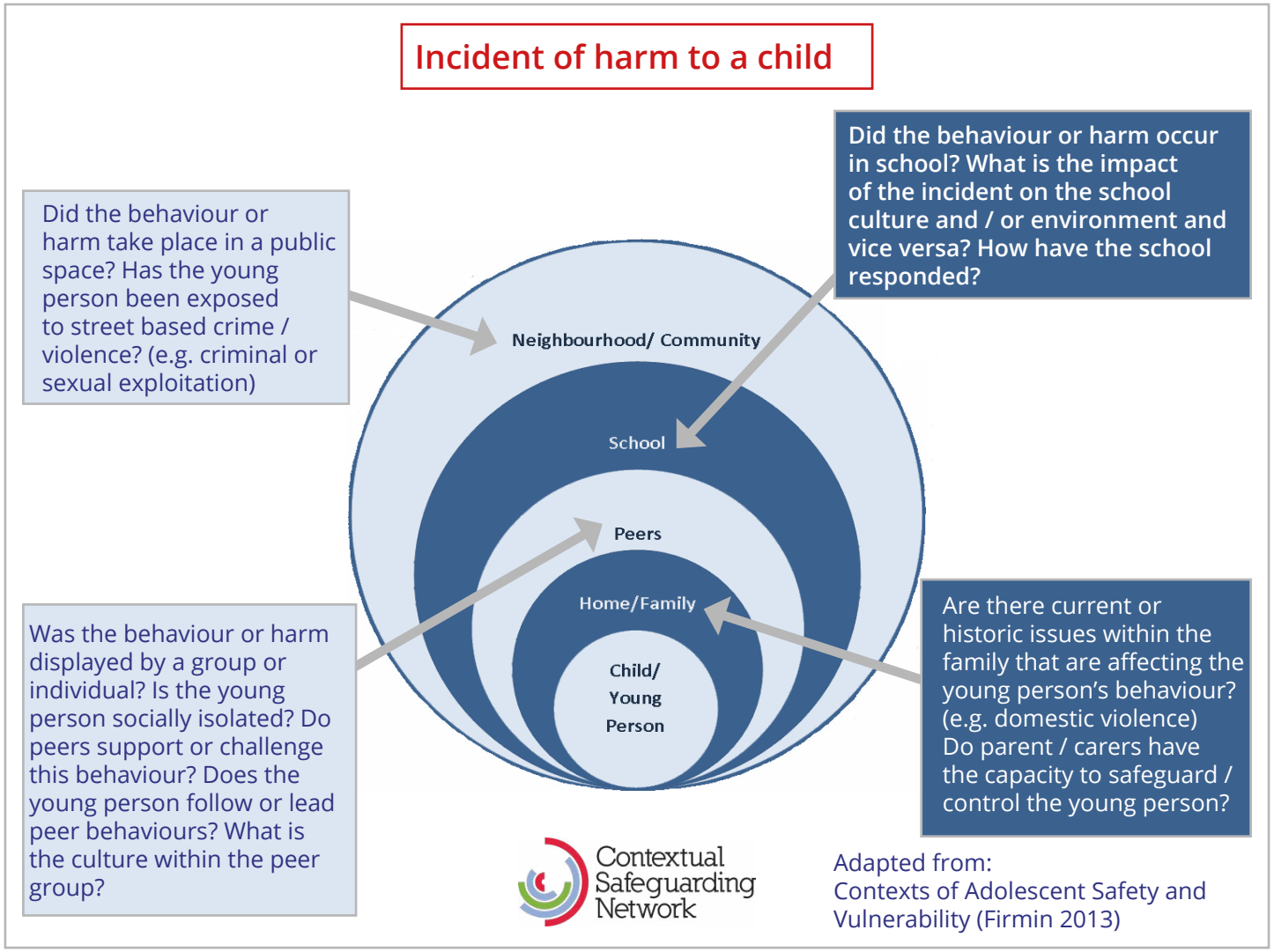
Wirral Safeguarding Children Partnership have developed this 7 minute briefing in relation to contextual safeguarding:

www.wirralsafeguarding.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Contextual-Safeguarding-7-minute-briefing.pdf



Schools as a "context" – what can schools do?

Within the contextual safeguarding framework, a school or college is a context in which children could potentially experience harm. Likewise it is important to note that schools are places where children can also be safeguarded from future harm.



As such, school leaders should consider their location, environment and culture and how as an organisation they are able to reduce the risk of potential abuse or harm, and increase the level of protection and prevention. This can be implemented in a variety of ways including:

1. **Assessing the site, buildings and environment to determine any potential areas which could be prone to antisocial or harmful behaviour. This can extend to the neighbourhood around the school.**

   By determining areas of the school or locality where young people could be more likely to experience harm, measures can be put in place to reduce the risk. Part of this risk assessment should also include seeking the views of children and staff. An example of a higher risk area could be a corner of the school playground which does not have a clear line of vision by supervising staff. This location could then become vulnerable to incidents of sexual harassment, etc. Feedback from children could confirms this. A simple but effective measure to reduce the risk could be the use of a convex mirror to increase the visibility and reduce the probability of incidents taking place out of sight. This could be seen as "designing out" opportunities for abuse to occur.

2. **Collating and analysing information regarding the location of behavioural incidents. Are there issues affecting the safety of students linked to the physical layout or organisation of the school?**

   If leaders are able to analyse where incidents of poor or risky behaviour are taking place within school, they can then put in place systems or procedures to address some of the issues. An example of this may be an analysis of data indicates that there are an increased number of bullying incidents occurring on a Thursday break time in the girls' toilets. This could then be investigated and appropriate measures put in place (e.g. increased supervision within the area, better lighting, etc.) to prevent incidents reoccurring.

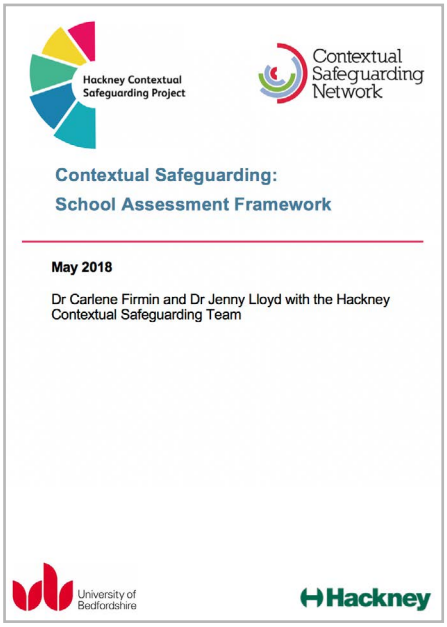
3. **Analysing the protective information shared with the school community, which strengthens how young people are safeguarded from harm.**

   Safeguarding messages are given out to the whole school community all of the time. Promoting and sharing key information with young people is vital in strengthening and building resilience. This can be done via SRE, PSHE and the across the general curriculum. If leaders are able to demonstrate where these messages are taught, they are then able to recognise any gaps or areas for development. In addition, appropriate safeguarding training for staff can strengthen their ability to be a protective "guardian" of young people. This ensures that staff are able to respond appropriately to student's physical and emotional wellbeing, as well as in turn promoting positive relationships between staff and young people. Opportunities for sharing knowledge with parents should also be considered as this can strengthen their protective abilities.

4. **Establishing and embedding a positive culture.**

   The safeguarding ethos determined by an organisation can actually prevent harm from occurring (or reoccurring). Building strong relationships between peers, staff and the community are essential for embedding a culture where unacceptable behaviour is challenged at every level, and therefore is less likely to occur.

The Contextual Safeguarding Network provides a range of tools, resources and videos for practitioners working in schools. These include a toolkit for assessing school responses to harmful sexual behaviour, videos on how contextual safeguarding applies to schools, resources for multi-agency partners to consider school exclusions and managed moves, and briefings for education providers. More information and assessment templates can be accessed from their website (a free account need to be set up in order to access the toolkit and other resources):
www.contextualsafeguarding.org.uk/toolkits/scale-up-toolkit/schools/school-assessments



Signs of Safety

Many Local Authorities are developing better ways of working with families.

These are often referred to as:

- **Signs of Safety**
- **Supporting Families Enhancing Futures**
- **Strengthening Families Approach**

Knowsley: www.knowsleyscb.org.uk/signs-of-safety-model-newsletter
Wirral: www.wirralsafeguarding.co.uk/professionals/supporting-families-enhancing-futures
St Helens: https://sthelenssafeguarding.org.uk/scp/p/newsletters

Understanding the 'Signs of Safety' approach with families:
Signs of Safety is a solution-focussed, strength-based approach to enable all multi-agency professionals to engage more effectively with children, young people and families. It aims to build better relationships with families in order to achieve better outcomes for children and young people.

Signs of Safety (SOS) is now widely recognised internationally as the leading approach to safeguarding casework. It can be used right across the safeguarding continuum by all professionals and agencies. It is a questioning (not an expert) approach.

Below is a video that introduces 'Signs of Safety' as a way of working with children and families.
https://bit.ly/2GF6W3p

The SOS framework includes assessment and planning tools that consider:

- **What are we worried about?** (Considering past harm, future danger, complicating factors)
- **What is working well?** (Considering existing strengths and existing safety)
- **What needs to happen?** (Considering the family and child protection safety goals and next steps for future safety)?
- **Safety Scale**. (Where are we on a scale of 0 - 10 where 10 means there is enough safety for the case to be closed, and 0 means it is certain that this child will be (re)abused? Judgement)

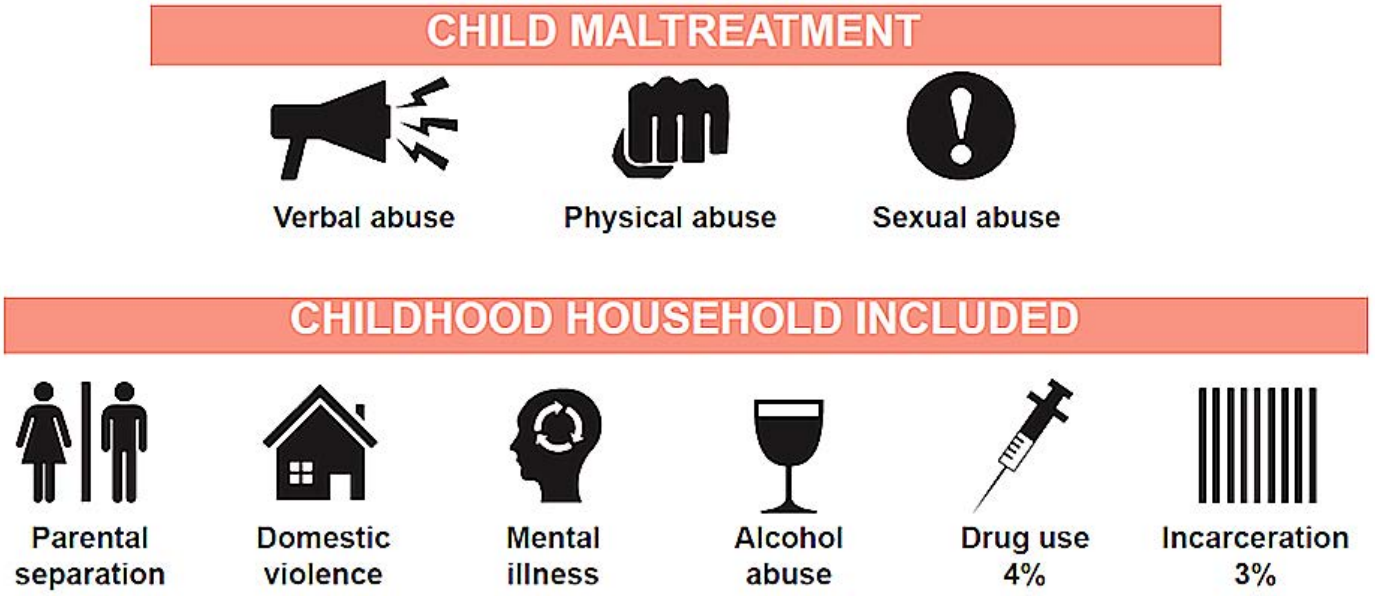
At the heart of all safeguarding and Signs of Safety is listening to and acting upon the child's voice.

Many of the systems and processes within Children's Social Care are now changing in order to embed the practice of Signs of Safety, and this roll out will continue over the coming months.

Visit your local safeguarding children partnership website to see what is offered locally.

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

ACEs are stressful experiences occurring during childhood that directly harm a child (e.g. sexual or physical abuse) or affect the environment in which they live (e.g. growing up in a house with domestic violence). There are 3 direct and 6 indirect experiences that have an impact on childhood development. The more adversity a child experiences the more likely it is to impact upon their mental and physical health.



Evidence suggests children exposed to 4 or more adverse experiences are more likely to participate in risk taking behaviours and find it more difficult to make changes and consequently, have poorer health outcomes.

The link below is to a very powerful video discussing ACEs and should be watched by all professionals working with young people.

- https://bit.ly/2L9wxkj

ACEs are common with research in England suggesting that almost **50%** of adults have experienced 1 ACE and over **8%** 4 or more. Research has found that a relationship with one trusted adult during childhood can mitigate the impacts of ACEs on mental and physical wellbeing.

Those with 4 or more ACEs are more likely to:

- Have been in prison
- Develop heart disease
- Frequently visit the GP
- Develop type 2 diabetes
- Have committed violence in the last 12 months
- Have health-harming behaviours (high-risk drinking, smoking, drug use)

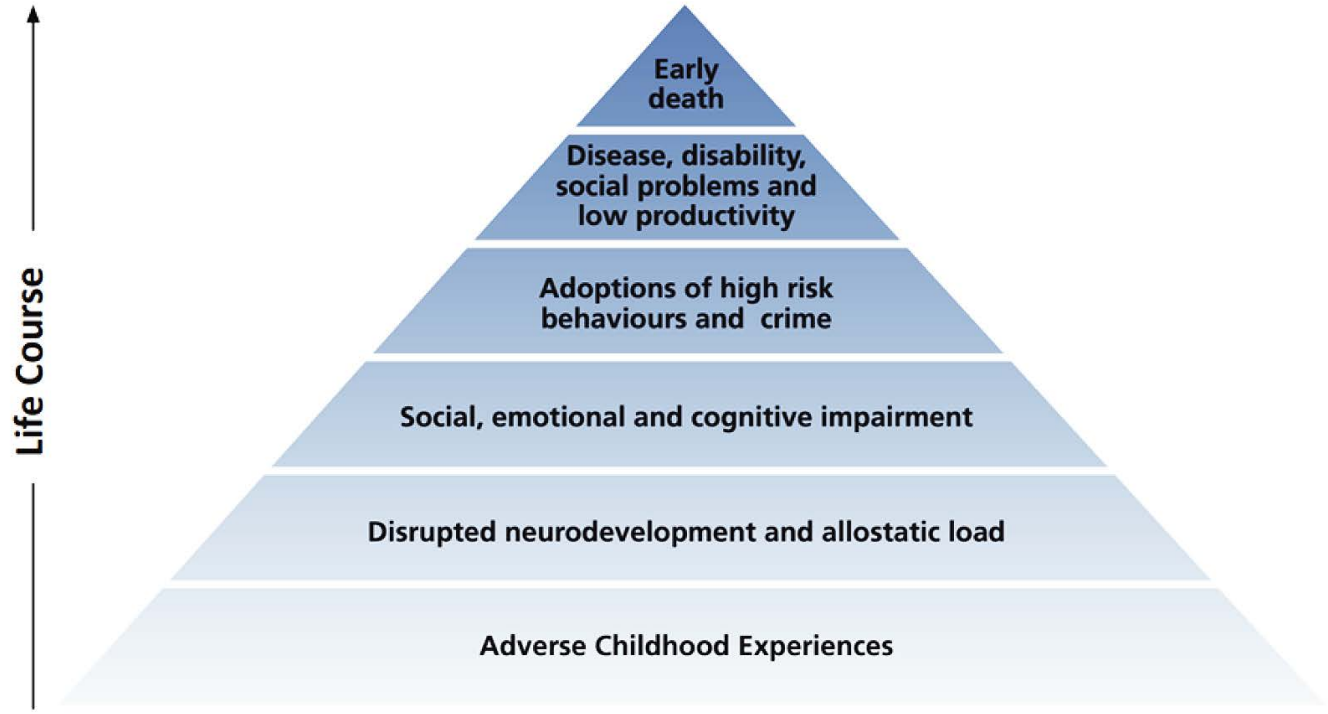
ACEs increase individuals' risks of developing health-harming behaviours

Compared with people with no ACEs, those with 4+ ACEs are:

- **4** **times more likely** to be a high-risk drinker
- **6** **times more likely** to have had or caused unintended teenage pregnancy
- **6** **times more likely** to smoke e-cigarettes or tobacco
- **6** **times more likely** to have had sex under the age of 16 years
- **11** **times more likely** to have smoked cannabis
- **14** **times more likely** to have been a victim of violence over the last 12 months
- **15** **times more likely** to have committed violence against another person in the last 12 months
- **16** **times more likely** to have used crack cocaine or heroin
- **20** **times more likely** to have been incarcerated at any point in their lifetime

Model of ACE impacts across the life course:

'When children are exposed to adverse and stressful experiences, it can have a long-lasting impact on their ability to think, interact with others and on their learning. ACEs should not be seen as someone's destiny. There is much that can be done to offer hope and build resilience in children, young people and adults who have experienced adversity in early life.'

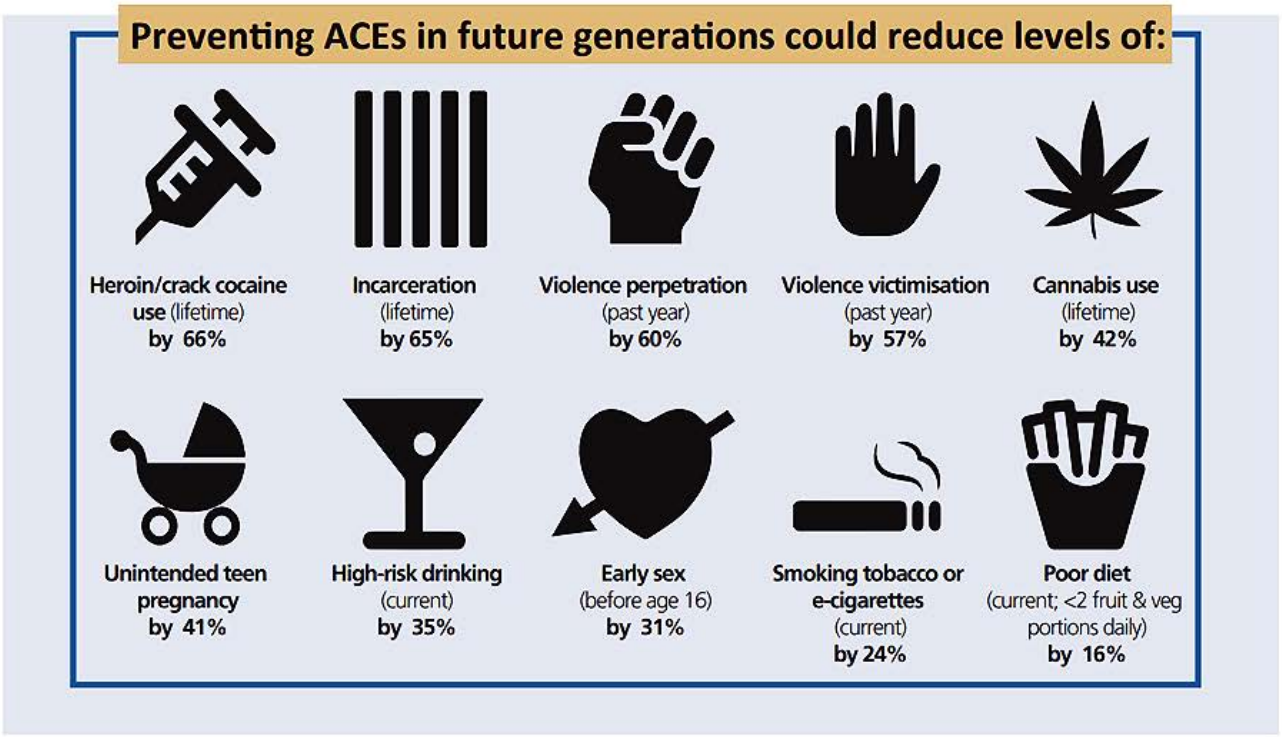


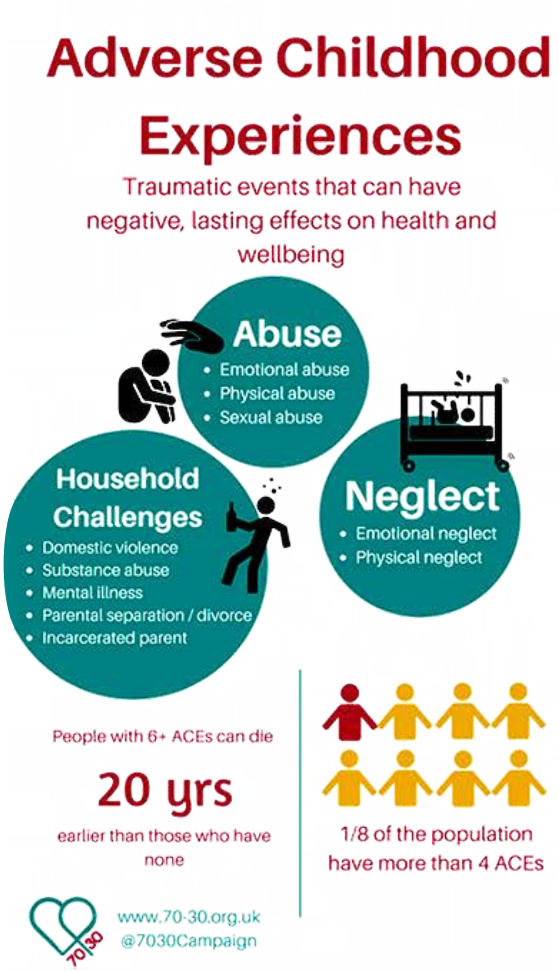
'Preventing ACEs should be seen within the wider context of tackling societal inequalities. While ACEs are found across the population, there is more risk of experiencing ACEs in areas of higher deprivation. We all have a part to play in preventing adversity and raising awareness of ACEs. Resilient communities have an important role in action on ACEs.'

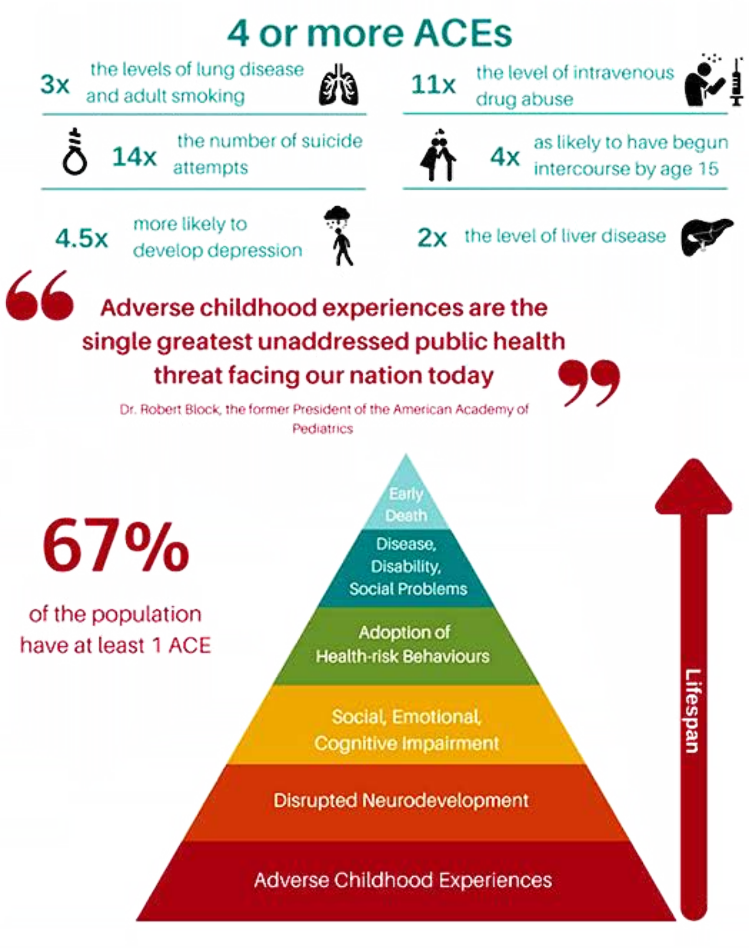
Sources: Public Health England / Wales / Scotland

What can we all do?

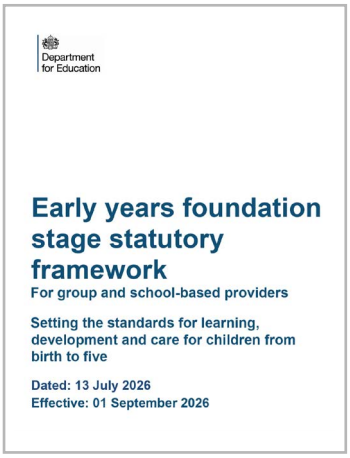
- Raise awareness of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)
- Provide early intervention
- Ensure there is further targeted interventions to children and families in need
- Monitor the outcomes for children and families more effectively







Safeguarding in the Early Years Foundation Stage


Department for Education

Early years foundation stage statutory framework

For group and school-based providers

Setting the standards for learning, development and care for children from birth to five

Dated: 13 July 2026
Effective: 01 September 2026

Early Years settings must follow the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the '**Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage**'. In addition, those settings who are schools must have due regard to '**Keeping Children Safe in Education**'. The EYFS framework states that whilst it is not statutory, other childcare providers may also find it helpful to refer to the '**Keeping Children Safe in Education**' Guidance. There is no requirement for schools to have separate policies to cover EYFS requirements provided the requirements are already met through an existing policy.

Providers must also have regard to '**Working Together to Safeguard Children**' and to the '**Prevent Duty Guidance for England and Wales**'.

The key principles within the safeguarding and welfare requirements state that:

- **Children learn best when they are healthy, safe and secure, when their individual needs are met, and when they have positive relationships with the adults caring for them. The safeguarding and welfare requirements are designed to help providers create high quality settings which are welcoming, safe and stimulating, and where children are able to enjoy learning and grow in confidence**
- **Providers must take all necessary steps to keep children safe and well**

Section 3 of this document 'The safeguarding and welfare requirements', sets out expectations of providers in relation to the following key areas:

- Child protection Suitable people
- Staff qualifications, training, support and skills Key person
- Staff: child ratios – all providers
- Health
- Managing children's behaviour
- Safety and suitability of premises, environment and equipment
- Special Educational Needs
- Information and Records
- Other Legal Duties

Some of the key areas for providers to note are:

- Providers must have and implement a policy and procedures to safeguard children. These should be in line with the guidance and procedures of the relevant local safeguarding partners (LSP)
- A practitioner must be designated to take lead responsibility for safeguarding children in every setting. The lead practitioner must attend a child protection training course that enables them to identify, understand and respond appropriately to signs of possible abuse and neglect
- Providers must train all staff to understand their safeguarding policy and procedures, and ensure that all staff have up to date knowledge of safeguarding issues. Training made available by the provider must enable staff to identify signs of possible abuse and neglect at the earliest opportunity, and to respond in a timely and appropriate way, including to inappropriate behaviour displayed by other members of staff, or any other person working with the children
- Registered providers must inform Ofsted of any allegations of serious harm or abuse by any person living, working, or looking after children at the premises (whether the allegations relate to harm or abuse committed on the premises or elsewhere). Registered providers must also notify Ofsted of the action taken in respect of the allegations. These notifications must be made as soon as is reasonably practicable, but at the latest within 14 days of the allegations being made. A registered provider who, without reasonable excuse, fails to comply with this requirement, commits an offence
- Providers must ensure that people looking after children are suitable to fulfil the requirements of their roles. Providers must have effective systems in place to ensure that practitioners, and any other person who is likely to have regular contact with children, are suitable
- Providers must tell staff that they are expected to disclose any convictions, cautions, court orders, reprimands and warnings that may affect their suitability to work with children (whether received before or during their employment at the setting)

- Providers must not allow people, whose suitability has not been checked, including through a criminal records check, to have unsupervised contact with children being cared for
- Providers must record information about staff qualifications and the identity checks and vetting processes that have been completed (including the criminal records check reference number, the date a check was obtained and details of who obtained it)
- Providers must also meet their responsibilities under the **Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006**, which includes a duty to make a referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service where a member of staff is dismissed (or would have been, had the person not left the setting first) because they have harmed a child or put a child at risk of harm
- In accordance with regulations made under Section 75 of the **Childcare Act 2006**, a person may be disqualified from registration. Where a person is disqualified, the provider must not employ that person in connection with early years provision. Where an employer becomes aware of relevant information that may lead to disqualification of an employee, the provider must take appropriate action to ensure the safety of children
- A registered provider must notify Ofsted of any significant event which is likely to affect the suitability of any person who is in regular contact with children on the premises where childcare is provided. The disqualification of an employee could be an instance of a significant event
- Staff members must not be under the influence of alcohol or any other substance which may affect their ability to care for children
- Providers must ensure that all staff receive induction training to help them understand their roles and responsibilities. Induction training must include information about emergency evacuation procedures, safeguarding, child protection, and health and safety issues
- Providers must put appropriate arrangements in place for the supervision of staff who have contact with children and families. Effective supervision provides support, coaching and training for the practitioner and promotes the interests of children
- At least one person who has a current paediatric first aid (PFA) certificate must be on the premises and available at all times when children are present, and must accompany children on outings. All newly qualified entrants to the early years workforce who have completed a Level 2 and / or Level 3 qualification on or after 30 June 2016, must also have either a full PFA or an emergency PFA certificate within three months of starting work
- Registered providers must notify Ofsted (within 14 days) of any serious accident, illness or injury to, or death of, any child while in their care, and of the action taken
- If children will sleep whilst on the premises, providers must ensure there are appropriate and safe spaces for this to happen and must ensure that sleeping children are frequently checked by staff.
- Providers must ensure that there are suitable, hygienic changing facilities for changing any children who are in nappies. The need for privacy during nappy changing and toileting will be balanced against any safeguarding considerations
- Staffing arrangements must meet the needs of the children to ensure their safety. Providers must ensure that children are adequately supervised, including whilst eating, and will decide how to deploy staff to ensure the children's needs are met. Children must be within the sight and hearing of supervising staff and must always be within the sight and hearing of staff whilst eating.

In addition to the 'Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage', the UK Council for Internet Safety has also produced two documents for Early Years settings regarding online safety considerations. One document is aimed at managers of settings to help them ensure their online safeguarding practice is in line with Statutory requirements and best practice, and one is guidance for practitioners.

Both can be accessed here:

- **www.gov.uk/government/publications/safeguarding-children-and-protecting-professionals-in-early-years-settings-online-safety-considerations/safeguarding-children-and-protecting-professionals-in-early-years-settings-online-safety-considerations-for-managers**
- **www.gov.uk/government/publications/safeguarding-children-and-protecting-professionals-in-early-years-settings-online-safety-considerations/safeguarding-children-and-protecting-professionals-in-early-years-settings-online-safety-guidance-for-practitioners**

Glossary

Abuse: A form of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm or by failing to act to prevent harm. Harm can include ill treatment that is not physical as well as the impact of witnessing ill treatment of others. This can be particularly relevant, for example, in relation to the impact on children of all forms of domestic abuse, including where they see, hear or experience its effects. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting by those known to them or, more rarely, by others. Abuse can take place wholly online, or technology may be used to facilitate offline abuse. Children may be abused by an adult or adults or by another child or children. Children may also cause harm to other family members, often referred to as child to parent or care giver abuse.

Accommodated: Refers to a child for whom the Local Authority has provided accommodation, with parental consent, under Section 20 of the **Children Act 1989**. A child is also accommodated if accommodation is arranged by the Local Authority for a child who is subject to Police Protection, Remanded or otherwise Lawfully Detained. A child is also accommodated if s/he is subject to a Supervision Order with a Residence requirement. All children who are accommodated come within the definition of Looked After.

Allegations Against Adults: This relates to adults who work with children where an allegation has been raised that an individual has behaved in a way that has harmed, or may have harmed, a child. An allegation is when a person who works with children has:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed, or may have harmed, a child; and/or
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against children, or related to a child; and/or
- Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children; and/or
- Behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children.

The adult may work in a paid capacity or as a volunteer. (See description of LADO for further details).

Care Order: A Care Order can be made in Care Proceedings brought under section 31 of the **Children Act 1989** if the Threshold Criteria are met. The Order grants Parental Responsibility for the child to the Local Authority specified in the Order, to be shared with the parents. A Care Order lasts until the child is 18 unless discharged earlier. All children who are the subject of a Care Order come within the definition of Looked After and have to have a Care Plan.

Child: Anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday. The fact that a child has reached 16 years of age, is living independently or is in further education, is a member of the armed forces, is in hospital or in custody in the secure estate, does not change their status or entitlements to services or protection.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS): The aim of the service is to make sure that all children and young people, up to their 18th birthday, who have mental health problems have access to good quality mental health services when they need them. CAMHS is a specialist service providing support and therapeutic intervention to children, young people and their families who are experiencing complex, persistent and severe emotional and psychological problems.

Child Arrangement Order: Child Arrangements Orders were introduced by the **Children and Families Act 2014** (which amended section 8 **Children Act 1989**). They replace Contact Orders and Residence Orders. A Child Arrangements Order means a court order regulating arrangements relating to any of the following:

a. With whom a child is to live, spend time or otherwise have contact; and
b. When a child is to live, spend time or otherwise have contact with any person

Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE): Occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into any criminal activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and / or (b) for the financial or other advantage of the perpetrator or facilitator and / or (c) through violence or the threat of violence. The victim may have been criminally exploited even if the activity appears consensual.

Child criminal exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.

Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP): The CDOP is responsible for the review of all deaths of children and young people from 0-18 years of age expected or unexpected, this includes perinatal and neonatal deaths (i.e. any infant who was registered as a live birth) and would normally reside within the LA area. Reviews of deaths below 22 weeks gestation or following a planned termination under the **Abortion Act 1967** will not be carried out. Deaths of children not normally resident in the area but who die there should also be notified; this information will be passed onto the relevant Panel who will then coordinate the information.

Child in Need: A child in need is defined under Section 17 the **Children Act 1989** as a child who is unlikely to achieve or maintain a reasonable level of health or development, or whose health and development is likely to be significantly or further impaired, without the provision of services; or a child who is disabled. Children in need may be assessed under Section 17 of the **Children Act 1989**, in relation to their special educational needs, disabilities, as a carer, or because they have committed a crime. Where an assessment takes place, it will be carried out by a social worker. The process for assessment should also be used for children whose parents are in prison and for asylum seeking children. When assessing children in need and providing services, specialist assessments may be required and, where possible, should be coordinated so that the child and family experience a coherent process and a single plan of action.

Children Missing Education: Children of compulsory school age who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school. Also known as 'CME'.

Child Protection: Part of safeguarding and promoting welfare. This refers to the activity that is undertaken to protect specific children who are suffering, or are likely to suffer, significant harm under Section 47 of the **Children Act 1989**.

Child Protection Conference: A Child Protection Conference is convened where section 47 enquiries are substantiated and a child is judged to be at continuing risk of significant harm. The Conference Chair will ask all attendees to decide what category of abuse or neglect applies to that child if they are to become the subject of a Child Protection Plan.

Child Protection Plan: A multi-agency plan to reduce risk when a child is believed to be suffering from or at risk of significant harm. A plan would be agreed following a child protection conference.

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE): Child Sexual Exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and / or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.

Chronology: A record which details all significant events and changes in the life of a child.

Contemporaneous: When there is a requirement for contemporaneous records to be made, it means that the records are made as soon as possible after the event occurred; this would be on the same day in most circumstances.

Contextual Safeguarding: An approach to understanding, and responding to, children and young people's experiences of significant harm beyond their families (also known as Extra-Familiar Harm or Harm outside the home).

Core Groups: The core group is a multi-agency group of practitioners who are working with the family and who are responsible for developing the child protection plan as a detailed working tool and implementing it within the outline plan agreed at the initial child protection conference.

County Lines: As set out in the Serious Violence Strategy, published by the Home Office, a term used to describe gangs and organised criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs into one or more importing areas within the UK, using dedicated mobile phone lines or other form of 'deal line'.

Disclose: When someone tells you that they, or someone else, is being harmed in some way.

Domestic Abuse: Domestic violence and abuse is defined as any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. This can encompass, but is not limited to psychological, physical, sexual, financial, and emotional abuse. Controlling behaviour is a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and / or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour. Coercive behaviour is an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim.

Early Help / Family Help: Early Help means providing support as soon as a problem emerges, at any point in a child's life, from the foundation years through to the teenage years. Family Help can also prevent further problems arising; for example, if it is provided as part of a support plan where a child has returned home to their family from care, or in families where there are emerging parental mental health issues or drug and alcohol misuse. From 2026 Early Help is referred to as "Family Help".

Early Help Assessment / Family Help Assessment: Where a child and family would benefit from co-ordinated support from more than one organisation or agency there should be an inter-agency assessment. These Family Help Assessments should be evidence-based, be clear about the action to be taken and services to be provided and identify what help the child and family require to prevent needs escalating to a point where intervention would be needed through a Statutory assessment under the Children Act 1989. An Early Help Assessment (EHA) / Family Help Assessment (FHA) can also be known locally as an FHAT (Family Help Assessment Tool), EHAF (Family Help Assessment Framework), CAF (Common Assessment Framework).

Emergency Duty Team (EDT): A social services team that responds to out-of-hours referrals where intervention from the council is required to protect a child or adult with care and support needs, and where it would not be safe, appropriate or lawful to delay that intervention to the next working day.

Extremism: Extremism is defined in the Counter Extremism Strategy 2015 as the vocal or active opposition to our fundamental values, including the rule of law, individual liberty and the mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs.

Fabricated or Induced Illness: Fabricated or Induced Illness is a condition whereby a child suffers harm through the deliberate action of their main carer and which is attributed by the adult to another cause. The child is often presented for medical assessment and care, usually persistently, often resulting in multiple medical procedures.

Acute symptoms and signs of illness cease when the child is separated from the perpetrator. It is a relatively rare but potentially lethal form of abuse.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM): FGM is also known as female circumcision and female genital cutting. These alternative terms are better received in the communities that practice it, who do not see themselves as engaging in mutilation. Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is a procedure where the female genitals are deliberately cut, injured or changed, but where there's no medical reason for this to be done.

Forced Marriage: A forced marriage (as distinct from a consensual 'arranged' one) is defined as one which is conducted without the valid consent of at least one of the parties and where duress is a factor. Victims can be male as well as female, and can be children as well as adults. Forced marriages are not confined to one religious group.

Grooming: This refers to actions deliberately undertaken by someone to form a trusting relationship with a child, with the intent of later having sexual contact with that child. Grooming can also occur using information communication technology (ICT). The **Sexual Offences Act 2003** makes it an offence for a person over 18 to meet or communicate with a child under 16 on at least one occasion and following the initial contact they intentionally meet or travel to meet, a child with the intention of committing a sexual offence.

Harmful Practices: The collective term used to describe Female Genital Mutilation, Forced Marriage and so-called Honour Based Abuse.

Hate Crime: Hate crime is defined as 'any criminal offence which is perceived, by the victim or any other person, to be motivated by hostility or prejudice towards someone based on a personal characteristic'. The five monitored strands are race, religion / faith, sexual orientation, disability, and gender-identity.

Holistic: The term is used in reference to assessments such as the CAF. This means that all aspects of an individual's needs be they psychological, physical or social, should be taken into account and seen as a whole.

Honour Based Violence or Abuse: Honour based abuse is a collection of practices, which are used to control behaviour within families or other social groups to protect perceived cultural and religious beliefs and / or honour. Such violence can occur when perpetrators perceive that a relative has shamed the family and / or community by breaking their honour code.

Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVA): An IDVA is a specialist domestic abuse professional who supports victims at the highest risk of serious injury or murder. Their job is to make the victim and their family as safe as possible. They stand alongside victims and make sure they get whatever help they need providing vital emotional and practical support to victims. They deal with everything from getting an injunction, to sorting out money, to having the locks changed. Their job is to make sure the victim is safe – and they do whatever it takes.

Independent Sexual Violence Advocate (ISVA): The ISVA offers practical and emotional support to victims of sexual violence, regardless of whether they have decided to report this to the police or not. The ISVA is an independent and confidential service that works closely with relevant agencies to ensure victims get the advice, information and support that they need. ISVA support can take the format of either face to face visits, telephone contact or both and can support through any legal processes and help victims to access other support services.

Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO): Local Authorities should have designated a particular officer, or team of officers (either as part of multi-agency arrangements or otherwise), to be involved in the management and oversight of allegations against people who work with children. The LADO is involved from the initial phase of the allegation through to the conclusion of the case.

Local Safeguarding Children Partnerships (LSCP): Previously known as Local Safeguarding Children Boards. There is a shared responsibility between organisations and agencies to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in a local area. The LSCP is made up of the safeguarding partners and relevant agencies, who ensure that there are locally agreed arrangements for the monitoring and implementation of multi-agency safeguarding children procedures.

Looked After Child: A Looked After Child (sometimes referred to as 'LAC' or Child Looked After 'CLA' or Child in Care 'CIC') is a child who is accommodated by the Local Authority, a child who is the subject to an Interim Care Order, full Care Order or Emergency Protection Order; or a child who is remanded by a court into Local Authority accommodation or Youth Detention Accommodation. In addition, where a child is placed for Adoption or the Local Authority is authorised to place a child for adoption - either through the making of a Placement Order or the giving of Parental Consent to Adoptive Placement - the child is a Looked After Child. Looked After Children may be placed with parents, foster carers (including relatives and friends), in Children's Homes, in Secure Accommodation or with prospective adopters.

Missing Child: A child reported as missing to the police by their family or carers (also known as Missing from Home or Missing from Care).

Modern Slavery: Men, women and children – UK Nationals and those from abroad - are exploited in the sex industry, through forced labour, domestic servitude in the home and forced criminal activity. Modern slavery has been identified in nail bars, brothels, car washes, massage parlours and rural businesses. Modern Slavery often involves human trafficking. Traffickers and slave masters use whatever means they have at their disposal to coerce, deceive and force individuals into a life of abuse, servitude and inhumane treatment.

Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA): The Criminal Justice Act 2003 (CJA 2003) provides for the establishment of Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) in each of the 42 criminal justice areas in England and Wales. These are designed to protect the public, including previous victims of crime, from serious harm by sexual and violent offenders. They require the Local Criminal Justice Agencies and other bodies dealing with offenders to work together in partnership in dealing with these offenders.

Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC): The MARAC is a victim-focused meeting where information is shared on the highest risk cases of domestic abuse between partner agencies including Police, Health, Children's Services, Housing, IDVAs (Independent Domestic Violence Advocates) as well as other specialists from the Statutory and voluntary sectors. By bringing all agencies together at a MARAC, and ensuring that whenever possible the voice of the victim is represented by the IDVA, a risk focused, co-ordinated safety plan can be drawn up to support the victims by reducing the risks identified.

Multi-agency Working: This is about different services, agencies and teams of professionals and other staff working together to provide the services that fully meet the needs of children, young people and their parent / carers.

National Referral Mechanism (NRM): The NRM is a victim identification and support process which is designed to keep it easier for all the different agencies that could be involved in a trafficking case – e.g. police, Home Office UK Visas and Immigration Directorate, Local Authorities, Health and Social Care (HSC) Trust in Northern Ireland, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) – to co-operate; to share information about potential victims and facilitate their access to advice, accommodation and support.

New Psychoactive Substances: Often incorrectly called legal highs, new psychoactive substances contain one or more chemical substances which produce similar effects to illegal drugs such as cocaine, cannabis and ecstasy. It is illegal to produce, supply or import for human consumption under the Psychoactive Substances Act 2016.

Operation Encompass: A system of information sharing between the Police and schools to safeguard and support children and young people who have been involved in a domestic abuse incident.

Private Fostering: Private fostering is when an arrangement is made between the parents of a child, and someone who is not a close relative (i.e. they are not a parent, step-parent, aunt, uncle, adult sibling or grandparent or person with parental responsibility) to provide care and accommodation for that child. The child must be under 16 years (or 18 if a young person with a disability) and the arrangement is intended for 28 days or more.

Professionals Meeting: A multi-agency professionals meeting is a tool to support practitioners in all agencies who have a genuine desire to work openly with families, but who may need the opportunity to talk with other professionals without the family being present.

Safeguarding: Defined as protecting children from maltreatment, preventing impairment of children's mental and physical health or development, ensuring that children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care and taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

Safeguarding partners: A safeguarding partner in relation to a Local Authority area in England is defined under the Children Act 2004 as: (a) the Local Authority, (b) a clinical commissioning group for an area any part of which falls within the Local Authority area, and (c) the chief officer of police for an area any part of which falls within the Local Authority area.

Safety Plan: A safety plan can help protect the victim and their children by planning what they might do in the case of future violence or abuse to increase their safety either within the relationship, or if they decide to leave.

Section 17: Under Section 17(1) of the Children Act 1989, Local Authorities have a general duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children within their area who are In Need; and so far as is consistent with that duty, to promote the upbringing of such children by their families, by providing a range and level of services appropriate to those children's needs. "Section 17" is often used as a shorthand way of describing the Statutory authority for providing services to Children in Need.

Section 20: Under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989, children may be accommodated by the Local Authority if they have no parent or are lost or abandoned or where their parents are not able to provide them with suitable accommodation and agree to the child being accommodated. A child who is accommodated under Section 20 becomes a Looked After Child. Section 20 agreements are not valid unless the parent giving consent has capacity to do so, the consent is properly informed and fairly obtained.

Section 47: Under Section 47 of the Children Act 1989, if a child is taken into Police Protection, is the subject of an Emergency Protection Order or there are reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is suffering or is likely to suffer Significant Harm, a Section 47 Enquiry is initiated. This is to enable the Local Authority to decide whether they need to take any further action to safeguard and promote the child's welfare. This normally occurs after a Strategy Discussion.

Sexting: The sharing of sexual imagery by young people. Also known as nudes and semi-nudes or Youth produced sexual imagery which best describes the practice because:

- 'Youth produced' includes young people sharing images that they, or another young person, have created of themselves
- 'Sexual' is clearer than 'indecent.' A judgement of whether something is 'decent' is both a value judgement and dependent on context
- 'Imagery' covers both still photos and moving videos

Single Assessment: An assessment completed by social workers following either a Section 17 or Section 47 referral. The process provides the opportunity for social workers to focus on the specific needs of, and allow appropriate time within the assessment for reflection and direct work with, children and young people to ensure a robust and analytical assessment.

Significant Harm: The Children Act 1989 introduced the concept of significant harm as the threshold that justifies compulsory intervention in family life in the 'best interests of a child'. Sometimes significant harm can be indicated by a single traumatic event (for example a violent assault, suffocation, shaking or poisoning). However, significant harm is more commonly attributed to an accumulation of significant events that damage a child's physical and / or psychological development.

Special Guardianship Order: Special Guardianship is an order under the Children Act 1989 and offers a further option for children needing permanent care outside their birth family. It can offer greater security without absolute severance from the birth family as in adoption. Special Guardians have Parental Responsibility for the child. A Special Guardianship Order made in relation to a Looked After Child will replace the Care Order and the Local Authority will no longer have Parental Responsibility.

Strategy Discussion: Whenever there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm there will be a strategy discussion involving Local Authority children's social care, the police, health and other bodies such as the referring agency. The purpose is to determine the child's welfare and plan rapid future action if there is reasonable cause to suspect the child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm.

Substance Misuse: This is the use of illegal drugs and the inappropriate use of legal drugs including alcohol, prescription medicines and substances such as solvents. Misuse is a broad term encompassing harmful use and dependence.

Trafficking: The two most common terms for the illegal movement of people are:

- Smuggling - when immigrants and asylum seekers pay people to help them enter the country illegally; after which there is no longer a relationship
- Trafficking - victims are coerced or deceived by the person arranging their relocation. On arrival in the country of destination the trafficked child or person is denied their human rights and is forced into exploitation by the trafficker or person into whose control they are delivered

Universal Services: Universal Services are services that are available to all children, young people and their families and are in place for all whether additional needs present themselves or not. It is services that children and young people are entitled to such as schools, health, nurseries and youth settings.

Virtual Headteacher: Section 99 of the Children and Families Act 2014 imposes upon Local Authorities a requirement to appoint an officer to promote the educational achievement of Looked After Children - sometimes referred to as a 'Virtual School Head'.

Whistleblowing: The term used for policies / procedures for the reporting of concerns about colleagues or managers.

The governors' minutes should reflect that the full governing body has reviewed and agreed the school's child protection policy. Schools are reminded that they should personalise this model policy framework for their setting considering the age and needs of their children together with the local context. This should include the school's own procedures for managing peer on peer abuse and sexual violence and sexual harassment. SIL has indicated in red throughout the policy where schools should add additional information in order to make the policy specific and relevant for their setting. This policy has been updated for schools to draw upon from September 2026 when the revised Keeping Children Safe in Education guidance comes into effect. The school's own policy should be made publicly available on the school's website.

Model Child Protection Policy

School Details

Headteacher:	**xxxxx**
Designated Safeguarding Lead:	**xxxxx**
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead(s):	**xxxxx**
Designated Teacher for Looked-after Children:	**xxxxx**
Link Governor for Safeguarding:	**xxxxx**
Chair of Governors:	**xxxxx**
Policy date:	**xxxxx**
Policy status:	Statutory
Policy review cycle:	Annual
Next review date:	**xxxxx**

This policy provides guidance to all adults working within the school whether paid or voluntary or directly employed by the school or by a third party.

This policy should be read alongside Part 1 and Annex A of Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026, and in conjunction with Section 1 of the SIL Schools Safeguarding Handbook, which is made available to all staff and volunteers within our school.

1. Introduction:

School Name and its governing body recognises its duty towards safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children as set out in Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 / Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. **School should amend here to reflect the denomination of school.**

Our school will prevent and respond to abuse, neglect and exploitation by ensuring that the ethos and atmosphere of the school is conducive to a safe environment. Pupils and parents/carers will feel supported and able to report safeguarding concerns to any member of staff or volunteer. Staff and volunteers will feel they are supported by colleagues and the senior management team, including the governing body, and are able to report and seek advice and guidance on any safeguarding concerns, including those regarding colleagues or themselves. We will protect children at risk of abuse, neglect or exploitation by having policies and procedures in place that reflect current legislation, guidance and best practice.

As part of our safeguarding ethos, we encourage children to respect the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. We will ensure that partisan political views are not promoted in the teaching of any subject in the school and where political issues are brought to the attention of the pupils, reasonably practicable steps will be taken to offer a balanced presentation of opposing views to pupils.

We will ensure that reasonable steps are taken to ensure visitors to the school do not share messages with the school community which are contrary to our school ethos and beliefs.

Safeguarding is everybody's responsibility and, as such, this policy applies to all staff and volunteers working in the school. An allegation, disclosure or suspicion of abuse, or an expression of concern about abuse, could be made to any member of staff, not just those with a teaching or welfare-related role. Similarly, any member of staff may observe or suspect an incident of abuse.

2. Child Protection Statement

Our school is committed to safeguarding children and promoting children's welfare and expects all staff, governors, volunteers and visitors to share this commitment and maintain a vigilant and safe environment. Everyone has a responsibility to act, without delay, to protect children by reporting anything that might suggest a child is being abused, neglected or exploited. It is our willingness to work safely and challenge inappropriate behaviours that underpins this commitment. The school seeks to work in partnership with families and other agencies to improve the outcomes for children who are vulnerable or in need.

*"Nothing is **more important** than **children's welfar**e. Every child **deserves** to grow up in a s**afe, stable, and loving home**. Children who **need help and protection deserve high quality and effective support**. This requires **individuals, agencies, and organisations** to be **clear about** their own and each other's **roles and responsibilities,** and how they work together." (DfE 2026)*

3. Definitions

In order to support effective multi-agency working, the following definitions are taken from **Working together to safeguard children 2026**.

Child:

A person from birth to age 18. The fact that a child has reached 16 years of age, is living independently or is in further education, is a member of the armed forces, is in hospital or in custody in the secure estate, does not change their status or entitlements to services or protection.

Child Protection:

Part of safeguarding and promoting welfare. This refers to the activity that is undertaken to protect specific children who are suffering, or are likely to suffer, significant harm. This includes harm that occurs inside or outside the home, including online.

Where a child is suffering significant harm, or is likely to do so, action should be taken to protect that child.

Safeguarding Children:

Action should be taken to promote the welfare of a child in need of additional support, even if they are not suffering harm or are at immediate risk.

"Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is defined as providing help and support to meet the needs of children as soon as problems emerge; protecting children from maltreatment, whether that is within the home or outside, including online; preventing impairment of children's mental and physical health or development; ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care; promoting the upbringing of children with their birth parents, or otherwise their family network through a kinship care arrangement, whenever possible and where this is in the best interests of the children and taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes set out in the **Children's Social Care National Framework**." *(DfE 2026)*

Effective safeguarding means practitioners should understand and be sensitive to factors, including economic and social circumstances and ethnicity, which can impact children and families' lives.

Abuse:
Abuse is a form of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Harm can include ill treatment that is not physical as well as the impact of witnessing ill treatment of others. This can be particularly relevant, for example, in relation to the impact on children of all forms of domestic abuse, including physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional and psychological abuse, coercive and controlling behaviour and economic or financial abuse, where they see, hear, or experience its effects. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or extra-familial contexts by those known to them or, more rarely, by others. Abuse can take place wholly online, or technology may be used to facilitate offline abuse. Children may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child or children. This includes in teenage relationships, or under the guise of 'honour' based abuse including forced marriage and female genital mutilation, or abuse related to faith or belief such as allegations of demonic possession.

Physical Abuse:
A form of abuse which may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.

Emotional Abuse:
The *persistent* emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond a child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyber bullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

Neglect:
The persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:

- Provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment)
- Protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger
- Ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate caregivers)
- Ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment
- Provide suitable education

It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

Sexual Abuse:
Involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing.

They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse. Sexual abuse can take place online, and technology can be used to facilitate offline abuse. Child sexual abuse material available online may have been generated in a family environment. Online abuse can also take the form of cyber grooming or self-generated sexual content under coercion. Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

Further information regarding the signs and indicators of abuse are set out in the DfE guidance **Keeping Children Safe in Education** and can be found within the SIL Schools Safeguarding Handbook. This includes amongst others, the definitions and indicators of Child Sexual Exploitation, Child Criminal Exploitation (including County Lines), Domestic Abuse, Serious Violence, Female Genital Mutilation, Forced Marriage, Mental Health, so-called Honour Based Abuse, child-on-child abuse, Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment (including sexting and other related issues), Vulnerabilities to Extremism and Children Missing Education.

School should include here some additional definitions and context which are pertinent to the make-up of their school.

4. Policy Aims

- **To ensure school takes appropriate action, in a timely manner, to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children**
- **To ensure responsibilities and procedures are fully understood and that everyone can recognise signs and indicators of abuse or neglect and respond to them appropriately.**
- **To ensure that the school's practice meets local and national guidance and all statutory requirements are in place.**
- **Add any additional policy aims specific to your setting here.**

5. Key Principles

- The child's needs and welfare are paramount. All children have a right to be protected from abuse, neglect or exploitation and have their welfare safeguarded.
- **Keeping Children Safe in Education DfE 2026** reminds us that all staff should maintain an attitude of "it could happen here" where safeguarding is concerned.
- Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is everyone's responsibility. Everyone who comes into contact with children and their families has a role to play. In order to fulfil this responsibility effectively, all practitioners should make sure their approach is child centred. This means that they should consider, at all times, what is in the best interests of the child.
- Children should be listened to and their views and wishes should inform any assessment and provision for them. Staff should always act in the interests of the child, in order to protect them.
- The school recognises that if children and families are to receive the right help at the right time, everyone who comes into contact with them has a role to play in identifying concerns, sharing information and taking prompt action.
- The school recognises that scrutiny, challenge and supervision are key to safeguarding children.
- The school is committed to working with other agencies to provide family help for children before they become at risk of harm or require a 'child in need' statutory assessment. "Family Help means providing support as soon as a problem emerges, at any point in a child's life." (DfE 2026)
- All staff should be aware that abuse, neglect, exploitation, and safeguarding issues are rarely standalone events and cannot be covered by one definition or one label alone. In most cases, multiple issues will overlap.
- All staff should be aware of the family help process and understand their role in it. This includes identifying emerging problems, liaising with the designated safeguarding lead, sharing information with other professionals to support early identification and assessment and, in some cases, acting as the lead professional in undertaking a family help assessment.

- *"All staff should be aware of the process for community-based Family Help assessments:*
- *The criteria, including the level of need, for when a case should be referred to Family Help support and services, provided at:*
  - *Targeted early help level (under sections 10 and 11 of the Children Act 2004), and*
  - *Statutory services delivered under section 17 of the* **Children Act 1989** *(children in need, including how this applies for disabled children)*
- *The criteria, including the level of need, for when a case should be referred to local authority children's social care for assessment and for statutory services under Section 47 of the Children Act 1989 (reasonable cause to suspect a child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm)*
  - *Section 31 of the Children Act 1989 (care and supervision orders), and*
  - *Section 20 of the Children Act 1989 (duty to accommodate a child)*
- *And clear procedures and processes for cases relating to:*
  - *the abuse, neglect, and exploitation of children*
  - *children managed within the youth secure estate*
  - *disabled children" (DfE 2026)*
- All staff have responsibility to report their concerns about a child **without delay** to the Designated Safeguarding Lead, or in their absence the deputy designated safeguarding lead(s) or other senior member of staff. This should be done both verbally and in writing, using the agreed format. Whilst the Designated Safeguarding Lead will normally make referrals to Children's Services, **anyone** can refer their concerns to children's social care directly in emergencies or if they feel they need to do so. **Safeguarding-Mate** can support any member of staff through the process of making a referral.
- Everyone has responsibility to escalate their concerns and "press for reconsideration" if they believe a child's needs remain unmet or if the child is failing to thrive and in need or if the child is at risk of harm. Concerns about a child should always lead to help for a child at some point and the child's situation should improve.
- The school will work in partnership with other agencies to promote the welfare of children and protect them from harm, including the need to share information about a child in order to safeguard them. "Fears about sharing information cannot be allowed to stand in the way of the need to promote the welfare and protect the safety of children." **Working Together to Safeguard Children** 2026
- The school will work with other agencies to ensure any actions that are part of a multi-agency coordinated plan are completed in a timely way.
- The school will follow the Local Authority and the Local Safeguarding Children Partnership procedures and provide them with information as required.
- Staff, children and families will need support following child protection processes being followed.
- Children have a right to learn ways to keep themselves safe from harm and exploitation.

6. Legislation and Guidance

Schools and colleges must have regard for the DfE statutory guidance **Keeping Children Safe in Education** DfE 2026. **This child protection policy should be read alongside this statutory guidance and all staff must read and understand at least Part 1 and Annex A of this guidance.**

Local authorities have a duty to make enquiries under **section 47** of the **Children Act 1989** if they have reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm, to enable them to decide whether they should take any action to safeguard and promote the child's welfare. There may be a need for immediate protection whilst the assessment is carried out.

A 'child in need' is defined under the Children Act 1989 as a child who is unlikely to achieve or maintain a satisfactory level of health or development, or their health and development will be significantly impaired, without the provision of services; or a child who is disabled. A social worker will lead and co-ordinate any assessment under **section 17** of the **Children Act 1989**.

Section 175 of the **Education Act 2002** places a duty on local authorities (in relation to their education functions, and governing bodies of maintained schools and further education institutions, which include sixth-form colleges) to exercise their functions with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children who are pupils at a school, or who are students under 18 years of age attending further education institutions. Equivalent safeguarding duties apply to independent schools (which include Academies and free schools) through regulations made under **The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014**.

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026 provides additional guidance which makes it clear that protecting children from harm and promoting their welfare depends upon a shared responsibility and effective joint working between different agencies:

Everyone who works with children has a responsibility for keeping them safe. No single practitioner can have a full picture of a child's needs and circumstances and, if children and families are to receive the right help at the right time, everyone who comes into contact with them has a role to play in identifying concerns, sharing information and taking prompt action.

In addition, Working Together to Safeguard Children also reinforces the need to take action to provide early help before statutory services are required:

"Universal services and community-based early help is support for children of all ages that improves a family's resilience and outcomes or reduces the chance of a problem getting worse." DfE 2026

The school therefore understands its responsibility to engage with other professionals in Family Help Assessments when a child's needs according to the Local Safeguarding Children Partnership's Responding to Need and Level of Needs framework sit below the requirement for a statutory assessment.

The **Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act** 2026 has introduced an **Information Sharing Duty** to provide clarity for practitioners on what and when they should share relevant information for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. This Duty comes into effect from 30th September 2026. Local safeguarding arrangements, practices and procedures, alongside pre-existing statutory responsibilities, then determine how this information should be shared, and with whom.

As with all processing of personal data, data protection law determines how to do so appropriately. From 30th September 2026 the **statutory guidance** (correct hyperlink to be inserted when available) will set out what organisations and practitioners must do to comply with the Information Sharing Duty under section 16LA (s16LA) of the Children Act 2004, and what they should do to ensure consistent and effective information sharing to safeguard children and promote their welfare.

The **Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act** 2026 also introduces legal duties for schools regarding the management of allergies, which is set out within the statutory guidance **Allergy safety in schools**.

The **Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015** places a duty upon local authorities and educational providers to 'have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism'. The DfE has provided statutory guidance for schools and childcare providers: '**The Prevent Duty**' (December 2023). The guidance summarises the requirements of schools and childcare providers in terms of four general themes: risk assessment, working in partnership, staff training and IT policies. Our school will ensure that staff are aware of the indicators of extremism and radicalisation, why learners may be susceptible to being drawn into terrorism and know how to respond in keeping with local and national guidance by completing regular training in relation to Prevent.

Staff will use their judgement in identifying children who might be at risk of radicalisation, look out for concerning changes in behaviour and act proportionately which may include making a referral via Children's Services to the Channel programme. Equally children will be made aware of the risks and support available to them. We will ensure that children are safe from terrorist and extremist material when accessing the internet in schools. The Government has developed an 'educate against hate' website providing information and resources for schools and parents to support them to recognise and address extremism and radicalisation in young people.

As a school we will complete a risk assessment which assesses how our learners or staff may be at risk of being radicalised into terrorism, including online. Where specific risks are identified, we have developed an action plan to set out the steps they will take to mitigate this risk. This is proportionate and based on an understanding of the threat and risk in our local area, the phase of education and the size and type of our setting. **Add the following sentence if your school is within Liverpool:** Liverpool is a priority area, therefore schools can seek additional advice, guidance and training from the Local Authority's Prevent Coordinator and the Local Authority's Prevent Education Officer (details in SIL's Safeguarding Handbook). **Or add some detail regarding who would be the contact within your local authority area.**

The **Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act 2025** places a statutory duty on schools that fall within the scope of the legislation and are therefore qualifying standard tier premises to assess their vulnerability to terrorist attacks and take reasonably practical steps to reduce and mitigate risks. This includes ensuring appropriate planning and preparation (including training), and protective measures, naming a Responsible Person and registering with the Security Industry Authority (SIA) when this is required. The school adheres to the **Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act 2025: Statutory guidance**.

Section 5B of the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 (as inserted by section 74 of the Serious Crime Act 2015) places a **statutory duty upon teachers** along with regulated health and social care professionals in England and Wales, to report to the police where they discover (either through disclosure by the victim or visual evidence) that FGM appears to have been carried out on a girl under 18. Those failing to report such cases will face disciplinary sanctions. It will be rare for teachers to see visual evidence, and they should not be examining pupils, but the same definition of what is meant by "to discover that an act of FGM appears to have been carried out" is used for all professionals to whom this mandatory reporting duty applies. Information on when and how to make a report can be found at: **www.gov.uk/government/publications/mandatory-reporting-of-female-genital-mutilation-procedural-information**

Teachers must personally report to the police cases where they discover that an act of FGM appears to have been carried out. Unless the teacher has a good reason not to, they should also still consider and discuss any such case with the school or college's designated safeguarding lead and involve children's social care as appropriate. The duty does not apply in relation to at risk or suspected cases (i.e. where the teacher does not discover that an act of FGM appears to have been carried out, either through disclosure by the victim or visual evidence) or in cases where the woman is 18 or over. In these cases, teachers should follow local safeguarding procedures. DFE 2026

The school will also consult the government guidance **Multi-agency statutory guidance on female genital mutilation** (updated 2020) and will have reference to guidance provided by the National FGM Centre **FGM Schools Guidance - National FGM Centre**.

In addition, the school recognises the important role schools have in safeguarding children from **Forced Marriage**. The Forced Marriage Unit has published **Multi-agency statutory guidance**, with points 8.1, 8.2 and 8.3 focusing on the role of schools and colleges.

The school is clear that when it comes to the marriage of a child, the distinction between a forced marriage and an arranged marriage does not exist. Following the **Marriage and Civil Partnership (Minimum Age) Act 2022**, which came into force in February 2023, it is an offence to engage in any conduct for the purpose of causing a child to marry before their eighteenth birthday, even if violence, threats or another form of coercion are not used. Such a marriage is deemed a forced marriage. (The same legislation also provides that the minimum age at which one can legally marry or enter into a civil partnership in England and Wales is 18.) School and college staff can contact the Forced Marriage Unit if they need advice or information. Contact: 020 7008 0151 (Monday to Friday 9.00am – 5.00pm) or email: **fmu@fco.gov.uk**.

Early years providers have a duty under section 40 of the **Childcare Act 2006** to comply with the welfare requirements of the **Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage**. From September 2025, the changes to the EYFS framework became statutory for early years providers, which means there are requirements in relation to following up absence with children even when not statutory school age, new requirements to ensure safer eating, amendments regarding those that are required to have paediatric first aid training with regards to supervision ratios and changes in relation to nappy changing and toileting. **[Remove this paragraph if not applicable]**

The **Teachers' Standards** (DfE 2013, updated 2021) also requires all teachers to "uphold public trust in the profession and maintain high standards of ethics and behaviour, within and outside school, by:

- *Treating pupils with dignity, building relationships rooted in mutual respect, and at all times observing proper boundaries appropriate to a teacher's professional position*
- *Having regard for the need to safeguard pupils' wellbeing, in accordance with statutory provisions*
- *Showing tolerance of and respect for the rights of others*
- *Not undermining fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect, and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs*
- *Ensuring that personal beliefs are not expressed in ways which exploit pupils' vulnerability or might lead them to break the law."*

In addition, the Sexual Offences Act 2003 makes it clear that all members of staff are in a position of trust and would therefore be committing a criminal offence to have a sexual relationship with a young person below the age of 18, even if that pupil is over the age of consent. In addition, it would be a breach of trust to have a relationship with any school student over the age of 18.

The **Human Rights Act 1998** sets out fundamental rights and freedoms that everyone is entitled to and contains the Articles and protocols of the **European Convention on Human Rights** that are deemed to apply within the UK. It compels public organisations to protect and respect an individual's human rights when they make decisions about them. Under the human Rights Act it is unlawful for schools and colleges to act in a way that is incompatible with the Convention.

The specific convention rights applying to schools and colleges are:

- Article 3: the right to freedom from inhuman and degrading treatment (an absolute right)
- Article 8: the right to respect for private and family life (a qualified right) includes a duty to protect individuals' physical and psychological integrity
- Article 14: requires that all of the rights and freedoms set out in the Act must be protected and applied without discrimination, and
- Protocol 1, Article 2: protects the right to education

We recognise that being subjected to harassment, violence and or abuse, including that of a sexual nature, may breach any or all of these rights, depending on the nature of the conduct and the circumstances.

Schools and colleges also have obligations under the **Equality Act 2010** (updated 2018) whereby schools and colleges must not unlawfully discriminate against pupils because of their sex, race, disability, religion or belief, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, or sexual orientation (protected characteristics). Whilst all of the above protections are important, in the context of safeguarding, Keeping Children Safe in Education, and the legal duties placed on schools and colleges in relation to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, governing bodies and proprietors should carefully consider how they are supporting their pupils and students with regard to particular protected characteristics - including disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment and race. Guidance to help schools understand how the Equality Act affects them and how to fulfil their duties under the act can be found at **Equality Act 2010: advice for schools**.

In addition, the **Public Sector Equality Duty** places a general duty on schools and colleges to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, to advance the equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not. The duty applies to all protected characteristics and specific consideration must be given to equality implications such as, for example, the need to eliminate unlawful behaviours that relate to them such as sexual violence and sexual harassment, misogyny/misandry and racism. Further information can be found in the document **Technical Guidance on Public Sector Equality Duty: England (updated 2023)**.

The school and this policy also takes account of additional guidance including:

- **CSE Definition and guidance for practitioners** DfE 2017
- **Criminal Exploitation of children and vulnerable adults: County Lines Guidance** DfE 2023
- **Disqualification under the Childcare Act** DfE 2006
- **Information sharing: Advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services** DfE 2024 (superseded by Information sharing duty statutory guidance from September 2026 - hyperlink to be inserted when available
- **The Prevent Duty**: safeguarding learners vulnerable to radicalisation DfE 2023
- **How social media is used to encourage travel to Syria and Iraq** DfE 2015 (Briefing note for schools)
- **How Martyn's Law will affect education settings** DfE 2025
- The **Ofsted operating guides, handbooks and frameworks**
- **What to do if you are worried a child is being abused: Advice for practitioners** DfE 2015
- **Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people** DFSIT/ UKCIS 2024
- **Serious Violence Duty: statutory guidance** Home Office 2022
- **Domestic Abuse: statutory guidance** Home Office 2022
- **Working together to improve school attendance** DfE 2024
- **Searching, screening and confiscation: advice for schools** DfE 2023
- **Restrictive interventions, including the use of reasonable force, in schools** DfE 2026
- Other DFE statutory guidance including: online safety and children who go missing from home or care is found here: **www.gov.uk/topic/schools-colleges-childrens-services/safeguarding-children**

7. Communicating with parents and visitors

The school is committed to the principles of Working Together to Safeguard Children which states that *"A child-centred approach is fundamental to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of every child. All practitioners should follow the principles of the Children Acts 1989 and 2004. These Acts make clear that the welfare of children is paramount and that they are best looked after within their families, with their parents playing a full part in their lives, unless compulsory intervention in family life is necessary."*

The following statement is provided to parents/carers so they are aware of the school's responsibilities:

"The school ensures children learn in a safe, caring and enriching environment. Children are taught how to identify risky, unsafe or problematic situations, how and when to seek help, how to develop positive and healthy relationships and how to avoid situations where they might be at risk including by being exploited.

The school also has a statutory responsibility to share any concerns it might have about a child in need of protection with other agencies and in particular police, health and children's services. Schools are not able to investigate child protection concerns but have a legal duty to refer them. In most instances the school will be able to inform the parents/carers of its need to make a referral. However, the Information Sharing Duty clarifies that the school can also share relevant information without requiring the consent of the family and may be advised by children's services or police that the parent/carer cannot be informed whilst they investigate the matter or make enquires. We understand the anxiety parents/carers understandably feel when they are not told about any concerns from the outset. The school follows legislation that aims to act in the interests of the child and will aim to discuss any concerns and/or what information has been shared either prior to sharing, or as soon as is practical afterwards.

The school will always seek to work in partnership with parents and other agencies to ensure the best possible outcomes for the child and family."

School should consider if there is anything additional they wish to add into the statement above and should specify in this policy how this statement is shared with parents/carers.

The following notice is made available to all visitors in reception. In addition, all visitors are provided with additional safeguarding guidance.

Our school is committed to safeguarding children and promoting children's welfare and expects all staff, governors, volunteers and visitors to share this commitment and maintain a vigilant and safe environment. Everyone has a responsibility to act without delay to protect children by reporting anything that might suggest a child is being abused or neglected. We would expect you to also report to the headteacher or Designated Safeguarding Lead any behaviours of any adults working in the school that may concern you. By signing our visitors book you are agreeing to follow the school's safeguarding advice to visitors and where appropriate the code of conduct for staff and volunteers.

The names and photographs of the Designated Safeguarding Lead and those who deputise for them are displayed in reception and the staffroom **[school to add any other key areas where this information is displayed].**

8. Roles and responsibilities

The Headteacher is: xxxxx
The Chair of Governors is: xxxxx
The Designated Safeguarding Lead for Child Protection is: xxxxx
Those trained to provide cover for the role of Designated Safeguarding Lead are: xxxxx
The Designated Teacher for Looked-after Children is: xxxxx
The nominated Link Safeguarding / Child Protection Governor is: xxxxx
The nominated governor for dealing with allegations against the Headteacher is: xxxxx

School should include how to contact each identified person and include any additional key safeguarding staff details, such as the senior mental health lead, designated attendance lead, young carers champion, etc.

All staff (and volunteers) should:

- Contribute to ensuring students learn in a safe environment.
- Maintain the belief that "it could happen here"'.
- Read and understand as a minimum Part 1 and Annex B of the DfE guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 and engage in training which enables them to identify children who may need additional help or who are suffering or likely to suffer significant harm and take appropriate action. Staff should have an understanding of the specific safeguarding issues outlined in Part 1 and Annex B of Keeping Children Safe in Education e.g. fabricated or induced illnesses, faith abuse. Staff should be aware that behaviours linked to drug taking, alcohol abuse, truanting and sexting can put children in danger. Staff should be alert to the signs of child-on-child abuse and take appropriate action.
- Have access to Section 1 of the Schools Safeguarding Handbook which will further support knowledge and understanding of key issues to enable them to identify and respond to children who need additional help. Staff will ensure that they have read and understood this document.
- Recognise that any child may benefit from family help, but all school and college staff should be particularly alert to the potential need for family help for a child who:
  - is disabled or has certain health conditions and has specific additional needs
  - has special educational needs (whether or not they have a statutory education, health and care plan)
  - has a mental health need
  - is a young carer
  - is pregnant or is a parent themselves
  - has exhibited early signs of abusive, violent and/or harmful behaviours
  - is showing signs of being drawn in to anti-social or criminal behaviour, including gang involvement and association with organised crime groups or county lines
  - is frequently missing/goes missing from education, home or care
  - has been repeatedly removed from the classroom, experienced multiple suspensions, is on a part-time timetable, is at risk or being permanently excluded from schools, colleges and in an Alternative Provision or Pupil Referral Unit
  - is at risk of exploitation, modern slavery, trafficking, including sexual and/or criminal exploitation
  - is at risk of being radicalised into terrorism
  - has a parent or carer in custody, or is affected by parental offending
  - is in a family circumstance presenting challenges for the child, such as drug and alcohol misuse, adult mental health problems and domestic abuse
  - is misusing alcohol or other drugs themselves
  - has returned home to their family from care
  - is at risk of 'honour' or faith-based abuse such as Female Genital Mutilation or Forced Marriage
  - is showing early signs of abuse and/or neglect
  - is a privately fostered child
  - is persistently absent from education, including persistent absences for part of the school day

- Be aware of the indicators of abuse, neglect, exploitation and modern slavery, understand that children can be at risk of harm inside and outside of the school, inside and outside of home, and online. As a result, all staff will be expected to exercise professional curiosity to help identify children who may need help at the earliest possible stage.
- Be aware that safeguarding incidents and/or behaviours can be associated with factors outside of the school or college and/or can occur between children outside of these environments. All staff should consider whether children are at risk of abuse or exploitation in situations outside of their family home. Extra-familial harms take a variety of different forms and children can be vulnerable to multiple harms including (but not limited to) sexual abuse (including harassment and exploitation), domestic abuse in their own intimate relationships, criminal exploitation (including financial exploitation), county lines, radicalisation and serious youth violence.
- Be aware that mental health problems can, in some cases, be an indicator that a child has suffered or is at risk of suffering abuse, neglect or exploitation. Staff are well placed to observe children day to day and identify those whose behaviour suggests that they may be experiencing a mental health problem or be at risk of developing one.
- Be aware of the fact that mental health problems can, in some cases, develop into safeguarding concerns. This could include self-harm, suicidal ideation or risk or suicide.
- Recognise that children may experience prejudice-based harm, including racism, faith-based prejudice, and other forms of discrimination and that these experiences may affect a child's welfare, wellbeing, mental health, and willingness to seek help. Staff should be alert to the signs and impact of prejudice-based harm and ensure that concerns are considered within safeguarding practice where appropriate.
- Understand that where children have suffered abuse or neglect, or other potentially traumatic adverse childhood experiences, this can have a lasting impact throughout childhood, adolescence and into adulthood. All staff should be aware of how these experiences can impact on a child's mental health, behaviour and education.
- Understand that all staff play an important part in working to prevent sexual harassment, online sexual abuse and sexual violence between children. Staff will assume that these behaviours are happening in our school and will work as part of a whole school approach to address such issues, including via the curriculum. Staff will understand how to handle reports of sexual violence or harassment.
- Staff must ensure that they appropriately challenge any form of derogatory and sexualised language or behaviour to ensure that everyone is respectful at all times.
- All staff must be aware that technology can play a significant part in many different safeguarding and wellbeing concerns. Children are at risk of abuse and harm online as well as face to face. In many cases abuse or other risks can take place concurrently both online and offline. Children can also abuse other children online, and this can take the form of abusive, harassing, and misogynistic/misandrist messages, the non-consensual sharing of self-generated intimate images and/or videos including those generated using AI e.g. deepfakes, especially around chat groups, and the sharing of abusive images and pornography to those who do not want to receive such content.
- All staff must be aware that safeguarding issues often overlap and can put children at risk of harm.
- Understand that schools and colleges play a crucial role in preventative education and this is most effective in the context of a whole-school or college approach that prepares pupils and students for life in modern Britain and creates a culture of zero tolerance for sexism, misogyny/misandry, homophobia, biphobic and sexual violence/harassment.

All staff should be able to reassure victims that they are being taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe. A victim should never be given the impression that they are creating a problem by reporting abuse, sexual violence or sexual harassment. Nor should a victim ever be made to feel ashamed for making a report.

- Report any concerns about a child's welfare **without delay** to the Designated Safeguarding Lead or Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead or in their absence a senior member of staff.

- Ensure that they record their concerns using the school's agreed reporting procedure **[school to add in specific reporting procedures here e.g. CPOMS or child welfare concern form, etc.]** in a contemporaneous and professional fashion. Records will note the difference between fact and opinion. The child's voice will be made clearly evident.
- Understand that records of concerns could be requested as part of a police and/or social care investigation, or any court proceedings.
- Ensure that concerns relating to children remain confidential and are only shared with the appropriate safeguarding staff.
- Understand that any member of staff can make a referral to children's services should that be required, informing the Designated Safeguarding Lead of any action taken.
- Understand their responsibility to escalate their concerns and "press for reconsideration" if a child remains at risk or their needs are not met or if it appears that the school is not taking effective action in line with expected procedures. This includes the understanding that any member of staff can make a referral to Children's Services if required to do.
- Teachers and those providing teaching **must** personally report to the police cases where they discover that an act of FGM appears to have been carried out.
- Be aware safeguarding issues can manifest themselves via child-on-child abuse.
- Understand that it may be appropriate to discuss with the Headteacher matters outside of work, which may have implications for the safeguarding of children in the workplace. This includes information about themselves. Staff will ensure that they are aware of the circumstances where this would be applicable.
- Report any concerns (including those which might be considered to be low-level concerns) about the behaviour of an adult towards a child **without delay** to the Headteacher, Designated Safeguarding Lead, Chair of Governors or if required the Local Authority Designated Officer for Allegations against Staff.
- Follow the school's policies including this child protection policy and the school's code of conduct for adults and the **Guidance for safer working practice for those working with children and young people in education settings (2022)**.
- Understand the circumstances where it may be necessary to "self-report" incidents where they could have found themselves in a situation which could be misinterpreted, or may appear compromising to others, or if they have behaved in a manner which, on reflection, they consider to fall below the standards set out within the code of conduct for staff.
- Be aware that behaviour by themselves, those with whom they have a relationship or association, or others in their personal lives (in or out of school or online), may impact on their work with children.
- Be aware that if their role is within the scope of the Childcare Act 2006 and they commit a relevant offence that would appear on their DBS certificate or they become disqualified under the Childcare Act 2006, then they must inform their Headteacher. **[School should delete bullet point if not applicable]**
- Be aware that they should inform their Headteacher of any cautions, convictions or relevant order accrued during their employment, and/or if they are charged with a criminal offence.
- Understand that some children, including those with Special Educational Needs or Looked After, may be more vulnerable to abuse.
- *"Children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) or certain health conditions can face additional safeguarding challenges both online and offline. This can include:*
  - *assumptions that indicators of possible abuse such as behaviour, mood and injury relate to the child's disability without further exploration;*
  - *these children being more prone to peer group isolation or bullying (including prejudice-based bullying) than other children;*
  - *the potential for children with SEND or certain medical conditions being disproportionally impacted by behaviours such as bullying, without outwardly showing any signs; and*
  - *communication barriers and difficulties in managing or reporting these challenges risks that they do not understand what is happening to them is abuse;*

- *the need for intimate care or that these children are isolated from others;*
- *that these children are more likely to be dependent on adults for care; and*
- *these children may have issues over cognitive understanding – being unable to understand the difference between fact and fiction in online content and then repeating the content/behaviours in schools or colleges or the consequences of doing so." (DfE 2026)*

The DfE has provided additional practice guidance '**Safeguarding Disabled Children**' DfE 2009.

- Have access to the school's managing allegations against adults procedures and whistle blowing policy. In addition, the NSPCC whistleblowing helpline is available for staff who do not feel able to raise concerns regarding child protection failures internally. Staff can call: 0800 028 0285 – line is available from 8am to 8pm, Monday to Friday and 9am to 6pm at weekends, or email: **help@nspcc.org.uk**.
- Have access to **What to do if you are worried a child is being abused 2015: Advice for practitioners DfE 2015**
- Understand that any indication of failure to follow any of the procedures set out within this policy will lead to a formal investigation by the school.
- **School to add any other responsibilities that they consider staff to have.**

The Governing Body should ensure that:

- The school meets the statutory responsibilities set out in Keeping Children Safe in Education DfE 2026 and Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026.
- The school has a strategy for providing family help together with other agencies and supporting children and families by carrying out family help assessments, drawing upon the Local Safeguarding Children Partnership (LSCP) 'Responding to Needs Framework.'
- The child protection policy is reviewed at least annually by the full governing body and available to parents, normally via the school's website.
- All adults working within the school are aware of the school's code of conduct and this guidance is in keeping with the Guidance for safer working practice for those working with children and young people in education settings (Safer Recruitment Consortium 2022)
- The school's practice is reviewed in line with Local Authority guidance, Local Safeguarding Children Partnership (LSCP) priorities and procedures and any actions identified in the LSCP 175 / KCSIE Audit are completed.
- There is a named Designated Safeguarding Lead who is a member of the school leadership team. Governors will ensure that this person has the appropriate status and authority within the school to carry out the duties of the post. They will be given the time, funding, training, resources and support to provide advice and support to other staff on child welfare and child protection matters, to take part in strategy discussions and inter-agency meetings, and/or to support other staff to do so, and to contribute to the assessment of children. There are colleagues trained to provide cover for the role. Governors will ensure that all staff undertaking the role of Designated Safeguarding Lead or Deputy will have this role explicitly described within their job description.
- The school has procedures in keeping with the LSCP for dealing with any allegations made against any adult working within or on behalf of the school.
- There is a nominated governor, usually the chair, who is the case manager for managing any allegations against the Headteacher.
- There is an additional nominated safeguarding governor to liaise with the Designated Safeguarding Lead and champion child protection/safeguarding on behalf of the safeguarding body.
- The school follows safer recruitment procedures, including the statutory pre-employment checks on all staff working with young people. The Chair of Governors and safeguarding governor together with the headteacher review the school's single central record.
- The school itself is a safe environment where the views of children and families are listened to and where children are taught about safeguarding and how to keep themselves safe, including on the internet or when using new technology. Any complaints about services lead to improvements in practice.

- Ensure the school audits the health and safety of the school environment and any actions arising from the audit are addressed.
- There is a nominated governor responsible for ensuring that the **Meeting digital and technology standards in schools and colleges** DfE 2026 are met (specifically the **Filtering and monitoring** standards and **Cyber security** standards).
- The school has appropriate filtering and monitoring systems in place for IT systems, regularly reviews their effectiveness and encourages safe and responsible use of digital technologies.
- That staff and the leadership team have an awareness and understanding of the provisions in place for filtering and monitoring and manage them effectively and know how to escalate concerns when identified.
- It scrutinises the impact of the school's safeguarding training strategy and plan so that all staff, including temporary staff and volunteers, are aware of the school's child protection procedures. All staff must have child protection training which is regularly updated and forms part of an integrated, aligned training programme which is considered as part of the whole school safeguarding approach and wider staff training and curriculum planning. The Designated Safeguarding Lead and Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads undertake training in keeping with statutory training.
- That all governors and trustees receive appropriate safeguarding and child protection (including online safety) training at the point of induction. This training will equip them with the knowledge to provide strategic challenge to test and assure themselves that policies and procedures are effective and will support the delivery of a robust whole school approach to safeguarding. This training should then be regularly updated. Governors who also undertake a child facing role in school (either in a paid or voluntary capacity) will in addition, complete the school's safeguarding training for staff and volunteers.
- There is effective analysis of safeguarding data including bullying, attendance, exclusions, behaviour logs, incidents of sexual violence or harassment, pupils taken off roll, the views and progress and participation of vulnerable students. **Schools should draw upon the guidance from Ofsted in respect of analysing behaviour data.**
- All safeguarding practices are quality assured by the leadership team, including the auditing of safeguarding records and the supervision of the Designated Safeguarding Lead and other members of the safeguarding team.
- The governing body will appoint an appropriately trained designated teacher to promote the educational achievement of children who are looked after or have been previously looked after.
- There are clear systems and processes in place for identifying possible mental health problems, including routes to escalate and clear referral and accountability systems.
- There are clear systems and processes in place to identify and respond to issues of sexual violence, sexual harassment or harmful sexualised behaviours between children, including a sequenced curriculum designed to specifically address sexual harassment, online abuse, sexual violence and issues of consent in an age and stage appropriate way.

Governing bodies are accountable for ensuring that alongside this policy the school has a range of effective policies and procedures in place in line with local and national guidance, and for monitoring the school's compliance with them. Neither the Governing Body nor individual governors have a role in dealing with individual child protection cases or the right to know the detail of cases (except when exercising their disciplinary functions in respect of allegations against a member of staff or investigating a complaint brought to their attention).

The Headteacher will ensure that:

- The Single Central Record is up to date and the safer recruitment practices set out in Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 are followed in line with the school's Safer Recruitment Policy and Procedures.
- At least one member of every recruitment panel has attended safer recruitment training.
- Job descriptions and person specifications for all roles make specific reference to child protection and safeguarding.

- There is a listening and transparent culture within the school where both staff and children are able to raise concerns about poor or unsafe practices.
- Referrals are made to the Disclosure and Barring Service and/or the Teaching Regulation Agency as appropriate.
- They liaise with the Local Authority Designated Officer where an allegation is made against a member of staff.
- They liaise with the designated safeguarding lead in respect of any concerns raised about staff or volunteers which do not meet the harm threshold and are dealt with by means of the low-level concerns policy or procedure.
- The Designated Safeguarding Lead has a job description in keeping with the requirements of Keeping Children Safe in Education and that sufficient time, training and support are allocated to this role, including the appointment of colleagues able to deputise for the Designated Safeguarding Lead who have undertaken the same training and who also have the role explicitly referenced within their job description.
- The curriculum provides opportunities to help students stay safe including when online. Children should be aware of the support available to them.
- The RSHE / PSHE / safeguarding curriculum is appropriately sequenced to ensure children are taught about key issues in a planned and age/stage appropriate way, building on previous knowledge as they move through the school.
- They quality assure the school's child protection practices including the auditing of safeguarding records and the supervision of the Designated Safeguarding Lead and other members of the safeguarding team to ensure that actions and decisions are reviewed appropriately and that staff's emotional needs are met.
- The school meets its responsibilities under the Prevent Duty including ensuring there are reasonable checks made on visiting speakers and monitoring and filtering is in place across the school's IT systems.
- All staff have had opportunity for Prevent training either through face-to-face training or access to online resources: **www.support-people-vulnerable-to-radicalisation.service.gov.uk**

The Designated Safeguarding Lead:
The Designated Safeguarding Lead will be a senior member of staff from the school's leadership team and the role will be explicit within their job description. The school will also appoint a deputy designated safeguarding lead(s) who will be trained to the same level as the designated safeguarding lead and the role will also be explicit within their job description, however the lead responsibility remains with the designated safeguarding lead. The designated safeguarding lead will take lead responsibility for safeguarding and child protection (including online safety and understanding the filtering and monitoring systems and processes in place).

The designated safeguarding lead will have the appropriate status and authority within the school to carry out the duties of the post. The role of the designated safeguarding lead carries a significant level of responsibility, and they will be given the additional time, funding, training, resources and support they need to carry out the role effectively. Their additional responsibilities include providing advice and support to other staff on child welfare, safeguarding and child protection matters, taking part in strategy discussions and inter-agency meetings, and/or supporting other staff to do so, and contributing to the assessment of children.

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 sets out the broad areas of responsibility for the Designated Safeguarding Lead within Annex B. These are detailed below.

Manage referrals:
The designated safeguarding lead is expected to:
- Refer cases of suspected abuse to the local authority children's social care as required;

- Support staff who make referrals to local authority children's social care;
- Refer cases to the Channel programme where there is a radicalisation concern as required;
- Support staff who make referrals to the Channel programme;
- Refer cases where a person is dismissed or left due to risk/harm to a child to the Disclosure and Barring Service as required; and
- Refer cases where a crime may have been committed to the Police as required. The NPCC document **When to call the Police: Guidance for schools and colleges** can support with this.

Work with others:
The designated safeguarding lead is expected to:
- Act as a point of contact with the safeguarding partners;
- Liaise with the headteacher or principal to inform him or her of issues- especially ongoing enquiries under section 47 of the Children Act 1989 and police investigations. This should include being aware of the requirement for children to have an Appropriate Adult when in contact with Police Officers who suspect them of an offence. The DSL (or deputy) will communicate any vulnerabilities known to the school to a police officer who wishes to speak to a pupil about an offence and this communication will be recorded **[state where, e.g. child's CP file, CPOMS, etc.]**. Further information can be found in the Statutory guidance - **PACE Code C 2019** updated December 2023;.
- As required, liaise with the "case manager" (as per Part four of KCSIE) and the designated officer(s) at the local authority for child protection concerns in cases which concern a staff member;
- Liaise with staff (especially pastoral support staff, school nurses, IT Technicians, and SENCOs or the named person with oversight for SEN in a college and Senior Mental Health Leads) on matters of safety and safeguarding and welfare (including online and digital safety) and when deciding whether to make a referral by liaising with relevant agencies so that children's needs are considered holistically;
- Liaise with the school's senior mental health lead and where available, the Mental Health Support Team, where safeguarding concerns are linked to mental health;
- Promote supportive engagement with parents and/or carers in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, including where families may be facing challenging circumstances;
- Work with the headteacher and relevant strategic leads, taking lead responsibility for promoting educational outcomes by knowing the welfare, safeguarding and child protection issues that children in need are experiencing, or have experienced, and identifying the impact that these issues might be having on children's attendance, engagement and achievement at school or college. This includes:
  - ensure that the school or college knows who its cohort of children who have or have had a social worker are, understanding their academic progress and attainment, and maintaining a culture of high aspirations for this cohort; and,
  - support teaching staff to provide additional academic support or reasonable adjustments to help children who have or have had a social worker reach their potential, recognising that even when statutory social care intervention has ended, there is still a lasting impact on children's educational outcomes.
- Work with the Virtual School Headteacher who retains a non-statutory responsibility for the strategic oversight of the educational attendance, attainment and progress of children with a social worker (see non-statutory guidance **Promoting the education of children with a social worker and children in kinship care arrangements**);
- Act as a source of support, advice and expertise for all staff.

Training, knowledge and skills:
The designated safeguarding lead (and any deputies) should undergo training to provide them with the knowledge and skills required to carry out the role. This training should be updated at least every two years. The designated safeguarding lead should undertake Prevent awareness training. Training should provide designated safeguarding leads with a good understanding of their own role, how to identify, understand and respond to specific needs that can increase the vulnerability of children, as well as

specific harms that can put children at risk, and the processes, procedures and responsibilities of other agencies, particularly children's social care, so they:

- Understand the assessment process for providing family help and statutory intervention, including local criteria for action and local authority children's social care referral arrangements.
- Have a working knowledge of how local authorities conduct a child protection case conference and a child protection review conference and be able to attend and contribute to these effectively when required to do so;
- Understand the importance of the role the designated safeguarding lead has in providing information and support to children social care in order to safeguard and promote the welfare of children;
- Understand the lasting impact that adversity and trauma can have, including on children's behaviour, mental health and wellbeing, and what is needed in responding to this in promoting educational outcomes;
- Are alert to the specific needs of children in need, those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), those with relevant health conditions and young carers;
- Understand the importance of information sharing, both within the school and college, and with the safeguarding partners, other agencies, organisations and practitioners.
- Are able to keep detailed, accurate, secure written records of concerns and referrals;
- Understand and support the school or college with regards to the requirements of the Prevent duty and are able to provide advice and support to staff on protecting children from the risk of radicalisation;
- Are able to understand the unique risks associated with online safety and be confident that they have the relevant knowledge and up to date capability required to keep children safe whilst they are online at school or college;
- Can recognise the additional risks that children with SEN and disabilities (SEND) face online, for example, from online bullying, grooming and radicalisation and are confident they have the capability to support SEND children to stay safe online;
- Obtain access to resources and attend any relevant or refresher training courses; and
- Encourage a culture of listening to children and taking account of their wishes and feelings, among all staff, in any measures the school or college may put in place to protect them.

In addition to the formal training set out above, their knowledge and skills should be refreshed (this might be via e-bulletins, meeting other designated safeguarding leads, or simply taking time to read and digest safeguarding developments) at regular intervals, as required, and at least annually, to allow them to understand and keep up with any developments relevant to their role. This includes attendance at relevant multi-agency training provided by the local safeguarding children partnership.

Raise Awareness:

The designated safeguarding lead should:

- Ensure each member of staff has access to, and understands, the school's or college's child protection policy and procedures, especially new and part-time staff;
- Ensure the school's or college's child protection policy is reviewed annually (as a minimum) and the procedures and implementation are updated and reviewed regularly, and work with governing bodies or proprietors regarding this;
- Ensure the child protection policy is available publicly and parents are aware of the fact that referrals about suspected abuse or neglect may be made and the role of the school or college in this; and
- Link with the safeguarding partner arrangements to make sure staff are aware of any training opportunities and the latest local policies on local safeguarding arrangements.
- Help promote educational outcomes by sharing the information about the welfare, safeguarding and child protection issues that children, including children with a social worker, are experiencing, or have experienced, with teachers and school and college leadership staff. Their role could include ensuring that the school or college, and their staff, know who these children are, understand their

academic progress and attainment and maintain a culture of high aspirations for this cohort; supporting teaching staff to identify the challenges that children in this group might face and the additional academic support and adjustments that they could make to best support these children.

Providing support to staff:
Training will support the designated safeguarding lead in developing expertise so that they can support and advise staff and help them feel confident on welfare, safeguarding and child protection matters.

This includes specifically to:
- Ensure staff are supported during the referrals processes; and
- Support staff to consider how safeguarding, welfare and educational outcomes are linked, including to inform the provision of academic and pastoral support.

Understanding the views of children:
Understanding the views of children is essential to respond appropriately to their needs. It is important that children feel heard and understood. The designated safeguarding lead will be supported in developing knowledge and skills to:
- Encourage a culture of listening and taking account of children's wishes and feelings, among all staff, and in any measures the school may put in place to protect them; and
- Understand the difficulties that children may have in approaching staff about their circumstances and consider how to build trusting relationships which facilitate communication.

Holding and sharing information:
The designated safeguarding lead should be equipped to:
- Understand the importance of information sharing, both within the school and college, and with other schools and colleges on transfer including in-year and between primary and secondary education, and with the safeguarding partners, other agencies, organisations and practitioners;
- Understand relevant data protection legislation and regulations, especially the Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR); and
- Be able to keep detailed, accurate, secure written records of all concerns, discussions and decisions made including the rationale for those decisions. This should include instances where referrals were or were not made to another agency such as LA children's social care or the Prevent program, etc.

Information sharing and managing the child protection file:
The designated safeguarding lead is responsible for ensuring that child protection files are kept up to date. Information is kept confidential and stored securely. Records include a clear and comprehensive summary of the concern; details of how the concern was followed up and resolved; and a note of any action taken, decisions reached and the outcome. Files are only accessed by those who need to see it and any sharing of information happens in line with information sharing advice set out in Keeping Children Safe in Education.

Where children leave the school or college (including for in year transfers) the designated safeguarding lead should ensure their child protection file is transferred to the new school or college as soon as possible, and within 5 days for an in-year transfer or within the first 5 days of the start of a new term. This should be transferred separately from the main pupil file, ensuring secure transit, and confirmation of receipt should be obtained. Receiving schools and colleges should ensure key staff such as designated safeguarding leads and SENCOs or the named person with oversight for SEN in colleges, are aware as required

In addition to the child protection file, the designated safeguarding lead should also consider if it would be appropriate to share any information with the new school or college in advance of a child leaving particularly where the information would support an assessment of risk to others in the school as well

as the individual pupil to help them put in place the right support to safeguard the child and help the child thrive in the new setting.

A lack of information about a child's circumstances can impact on the child's safety, welfare and educational outcomes. For example, information that would allow the new school or college to continue supporting children who have had social worker and been victims of abuse, incidents that may indicate concerns about serious violence or harmful behaviours and/or details of those who are currently receiving support through the 'Channel' programme and have that support in place for when the child arrives.

Availability:
During term time the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) should always be available (during school or college hours) for staff in the school or college to discuss any safeguarding concerns. Whilst generally speaking the designated safeguarding lead (or deputy) would be expected to be available in person, it is a matter for individual schools and colleges, working with the designated safeguarding lead, to define what "available" means and whether in exceptional circumstances availability via phone and or Microsoft Teams or other such media is acceptable.

It is a matter for individual schools and colleges and the designated safeguarding lead to arrange adequate and appropriate cover arrangements for any out of hours/out of term activities.

To ensure continuity of safeguarding responsibilities, schools should implement robust cover arrangements for periods when the DSL is unavailable due to illness, leave, or other circumstances. This could, for example, include a confidential shared mailbox or equivalent system to ensure that safeguarding concerns are received, monitored, and acted upon without delay. **[School should detail here what the cover arrangements look like]**

According to Local Guidance it is expected that the Headteacher will be the case manager for any allegations against staff and make referrals to the Disclosure and Barring Service and/or Teaching Regulation Agency.

In addition to the role outlined in Keeping Children Safe the Designated Safeguarding Lead is also expected to ensure that:

The school has a specific safeguarding email account **[school to add email address here]** which is accessible by all members of the safeguarding team and ensures that all communication of a safeguarding nature is seen and responded to by the school on a daily basis.

- The social worker is notified if a child subject to a child protection plan is absent without explanation.
- The social worker is informed when a child subject to a child protection plan or a child in need plan moves to a new setting.
- A training log is kept of all child protection training including the names of those attending. All staff must have regular training and updates. Staff or volunteers who are unable to attend training will be offered the chance to receive missed training at the earliest opportunity.
- Child protection records are kept securely and separately from the child's normal file. Records will be transferred and/or retained in keeping with the Local Authority and NSPCC guidance.
- The school attends and contributes to child protection case conferences and child in need meetings, ensuring actions are completed in a timely manner. The school will complete the LSCP agency report ahead of each child protection conference.
- The school escalates its concerns with other agencies when a child's needs are not being met following the Local Safeguarding Children Partnership Escalation and Resolution Policy.

- All members of the safeguarding team have received appropriate training; that all referrals made are quality assured and that regular safeguarding supervision is provided to the safeguarding team to monitor all decisions and actions taken alongside the wellbeing of each team member.
- All staff read and understand part 1 and Annex B of Keeping Children Safe in Education and make available to them other key documents and guidance.
- School has an appropriately trained member of staff in order to fulfil its obligations under Operation Encompass, and that the school's commitment to Operation Encompass is known throughout the school community via the means of staff training, parental letters, posters and the school website.

9. Safeguarding Framework

In addition to this child protection policy the school has procedures or policies in relation to other areas for safeguarding children including:

School should add any additional relevant policy details here (or make amendments to titles below)

- Attendance
- Administering medicines
- Allergy safety policy
- Anti-bulling including cyber bullying
- Alternative and off-site provision
- Behaviour for learning
- Care and control
- Code of conduct for staff, governors and volunteers (guidance on safer working practices)
- Children in care (Looked After Children)
- Clubs, trips, educational visits and extended school activities
- Data protection
- Drug and substance misuse
- Disability objectives and accessibility plan
- Equal opportunities
- Emergency planning
- Evacuation and lock-down procedures
- First aid
- Intimate care
- Managing allegations against staff and volunteers
- Mental health and wellbeing
- Online safety and acceptable use policies
- Risk assessments
- Safeguarding advice for visitors
- Safer recruitment practices
- School and site security
- Sex and relationships education
- Special educational needs and disabilities
- Taking and using photographs
- Whistleblowing

10. Training and Induction

All staff and volunteers working in the school must be aware of systems within the school which support safeguarding, and these will be explained to them as part of staff induction. All staff and volunteers will receive an induction prior to commencing work in our school.

The induction will ensure the following documents and information are shared:

- Child protection policy (which should amongst other things also include the policy and procedures to deal with child-on-child abuse)
- Behaviour policy (which should include measures to prevent bullying, including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying).
- Staff behaviour policy (sometimes called a code of conduct) should amongst other things, include low-level concerns, allegations against staff and whistleblowing
- Safeguarding response to children who are absent from education, particularly on repeat occasions and/or prolonged periods
- Role of the designated safeguarding lead (including the identity of the designated safeguarding lead, deputies and/or safeguarding team members).
- Copies of any other relevant policies and a copy of Part one of KCSIE 2026

The school draws upon SIL's induction template and Safeguarding Induction Booklet (Schools' Safeguarding Handbook) to ensure all appropriate policies and guidance are shared.

All staff and volunteers working in the school must complete safeguarding training appropriate to their role as part of their induction and at a minimum of annually thereafter. As part of the requirement for all staff to undergo regular updated safeguarding training (including online safety which, amongst other things, includes an understanding of the expectations, applicable roles and responsibilities in relation to filtering and monitoring), safeguarding training will be integrated, aligned and considered as part of the whole school safeguarding approach and wider staff training and curriculum planning. The school's safeguarding training plan will build upon existing staff knowledge, in addition to refreshing key knowledge, and will be pertinent to the needs of the school community and local context. Safeguarding training provided to staff and volunteers will also be relevant to the age and stage of the children within our school community. In addition, all staff will receive safeguarding and child protection (including online safety) updates (for example, via email, e-bulletins, and staff meetings), as required to continue to provide them with relevant skills and knowledge to safeguard children effectively. **[School should add here the planned schedule and expectations for training.]**

The Designated Safeguarding Lead and deputies must complete safeguarding training relevant to their role. This level of training must be refreshed at least every two years, with further safeguarding training to be accessed on a minimum of an annual basis as best practice. This is to ensure designated staff have appropriate, up to date knowledge and skills which will enable them to identify concerns and make decisions that support the safety of the school community.

The governing body should receive appropriate safeguarding and child protection (including online safety) training at the point of induction. This training should equip them with the knowledge to provide strategic challenge to test and assure themselves that policies and procedures are effective and will support the delivery of a robust whole school approach to safeguarding. This training should be regularly updated. Governors who also undertake a child facing role in school (either in a paid or voluntary capacity) will in addition, complete the school's safeguarding training for staff and volunteers. The Link Governor for Safeguarding should attend appropriate training to enable them to fulfil the expectations of the role.

All staff have had opportunity to attend Prevent training either through face-to-face training or access to online resources: **www.support-people-vulnerable-to-radicalisation.service.gov.uk**.

The school will keep a safeguarding training log evidencing the training attended by the different groups of staff/governors and will seek to evidence the ongoing impact of this training.

11. Procedures for reporting child protection or child welfare concerns:

- All members of the school community have a statutory duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people. Staff and governors should not investigate possible abuse or neglect themselves.
- SIL provide an online resource 'Safeguarding-Mate' to support/guide colleagues decision making when they have a concern about a child or the behaviour of an adult: **www.sil-ltd.co.uk/safeguarding-mate**
- All concerns should be reported **without delay** directly to the Designated Safeguarding Lead, Designated Safeguarding Deputies, Headteacher or any member of the School Leadership Team. This should be followed by a written account of the concerns completed on the school's agreed Child Protection/Child Welfare Incident Form. **[School should amend this statement to reflect their own procedures e.g. if they use CPOMS or My Concern this should be detailed.]**
- Consideration will need to be given to immediately protecting the child and contacting the police and/or ringing for an ambulance if the child is injured.
- The Designated Safeguarding Lead or Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead will take immediate action without delay and will make a referral to children's services by telephone if a child is believed to be suffering or likely to suffer significant harm. This referral will always be followed up in writing.

Children's Services contact details are as follows:

- Liverpool CASS 0151 459 2606
- Bolton Integrated Front Door 01204 331500 option 2 (Emergency Duty Team 01204 337777)
- Halton iCART 0151 907 8305 (Out of hours 0345 050 0148)
- Knowsley MASH 0151 443 2600
- Lancashire 0300 123 6720 (Out of hours 0300 123 6722)
- Manchester Contact Centre 0161 234 5001
- Salford The Bridge Partnership 0161 603 4500 (Emergency Duty Team 0161 794 8888)
- Sefton CHAT 0151 934 4013 (Out of hours 0151 934 3555)
- St Helens Contact Cares 01744 676767 (Emergency Duty Team 0345 050 0148)
- Warrington 01925 443322 (Out of hours 01925 444400)
- Trafford Children's First Response 0161 912 5125 (Emergency Duty Team 0161 912 2020)

- The Designated Safeguarding Lead or Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead will follow the LSCP and Local Authority multi-agency procedures and consider the child's needs alongside the LSCP's Levels of Needs/Responding to Needs Framework (Threshold document) and consider whether a family help assessment or referral to children's services is needed. **[School should add a hyperlink to the local levels of need document here]**

Liverpool	https://liverpoolscp.trixonline.co.uk
Bolton	https://greatermanchesterscp.trixonline.co.uk
Halton	www.proceduresonline.com/pancheshire/halton/index.html
Knowsley	https://knowsleyscb.proceduresonline.com/index.htm
Lancashire	https://lancashirecsc.trixonline.co.uk
Manchester	https://greatermanchesterscp.trixonline.co.uk
Salford	https://greatermanchesterscp.trixonline.co.uk
Sefton	https://seftonscp.procedures.org.uk
St Helens	https://sthelensscp.trixonline.co.uk
Trafford	https://greatermanchesterscp.trixonline.co.uk
Warrington	www.proceduresonline.com/pancheshire/warrington/index.html
Wigan	https://greatermanchesterscp.trixonline.co.uk

- **Bullet point for Liverpool Schools only:** The Designated Safeguarding Lead or Deputy is able to refer to an online tool which helps professionals assess a child's level of need and decide which method of referral they should complete (FHA or MARF). The online 'Levels of Need Slider' tool can be accessed here: **https://liverpool.gov.uk/referrals/childrens-social-care-referrals/make-an-urgent-marf-referral** Schools can also make a Level 3 Family Help referral using the following link: **https://liverpool.gov.uk/referrals/childrens-social-care-referrals/access-early-help-support**
- Concerns about a child should always lead to help for a child. The school may need to escalate its concerns with Children's Services to ensure a referral is accepted or work with other agencies to ensure a Family Help Assessment is completed.
- The school will always seek to follow the Local Safeguarding Children Partnership procedures which can be found on their website.
- If school does not receive feedback within one working day regarding the outcome of a referral made to Children's Services, the Designated Safeguarding Lead will contact Children's Services immediately to determine the outcome of the referral.
- If school disagrees with the outcome of a referral, the Designated Safeguarding Lead will ask to speak to the social worker and/or manager who made the decision. Following this conversation, if they remain dissatisfied they will follow the Local Safeguarding Children Partnership Escalation and Resolution Procedures.

"SIL Schools' Safeguarding Handbook" and Part 1 of Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 provides key flowcharts and guidance to support staff and volunteers' understanding and decision making. This will support staff to make a referral themselves should that become necessary. The Designated Safeguarding Lead should be informed, as soon as possible, following the need for another member of staff to make a referral.

"SIL Schools' Safeguarding Handbook" will provide additional guidance about indicators of abuse and harm and how to respond to a disclosure. Guidance is also available on the NSPCC website: **www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe**

If a teacher in the course of their work in the profession, discovers that an act of Female Genital Mutilation appears to have been carried out on a girl under the age of 18 the teacher must report this to the police. Keeping Children Safe in Education provides additional guidance.

Concerns that a child is being radicalised should follow the normal safeguarding referral mechanism with an additional Channel or Prevent referral being made to the Local Authority's Prevent and Channel team. Contact details can be found in the School's Safeguarding Handbook.

12. Process to follow if a child makes a disclosure:

If a child makes a disclosure of abuse, staff should:

- Listen and keep calm. Do not interrupt
- Not promise the child that they will keep the matter confidential. Explain to the child who they will need to tell and why
- Observe visible bruises and marks, but should not ask a child to remove or adjust their clothing to view them
- Keep questions to a minimum as their role is not to investigate. If staff need to ask questions in order to ascertain whether this is a safeguarding concern, they should ensure they are open questions
- Use the "TED" model for asking open ended questions: "Tell me about that", "Explain that to me", "Describe that"
- Make a record of what has been said immediately afterwards in words used by the child and the member of staff to the best of their memory. Use capital letters for the child's words to help distinguish between the two.

- Note anything about the child which is connected i.e. any visible injuries including the position and description, the demeanour of the child i.e. crying, withdrawn etc.
- Clearly indicate whether fact, opinion or third-party information
- Report the matter immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead
- Seek advice from the Designated Safeguarding Lead if in doubt

Staff should not:

- Ask leading questions, put words into the child's mouth or press for details
- Rush the child
- Examine the child
- Investigate
- Promise confidentiality
- Summarise or use your own words to describe events
- Delay sharing the information with the Designated Safeguarding Lead

Further information can be found in part 1 of the SIL Schools Safeguarding Handbook.

All staff should also be aware that children may not feel ready or know how to tell someone that they are being abused, exploited, or neglected, and/or they may not recognise their experiences as harmful. For example, children may feel embarrassed, humiliated, or being threatened. This could be due to their vulnerability, disability and/or sexual orientation or language barriers. This should not prevent staff from having a professional curiosity and speaking to the DSL if they have concerns about a child. It is also important that staff determine how best to build trusted relationships with children and young people which facilitate communication.

13. Confidentiality, information sharing, record transfer and record keeping and retention:
Information sharing is vital in identifying and tacking all forms of abuse and neglect, and in promoting children's welfare, including their education outcomes. Schools have clear powers to share, hold and use information for these purposes.

The school recognises that all matters relating to child protection are confidential. The Headteacher, Designated Safeguarding Lead and/or Deputy will disclose any information about a child to other members of staff on a 'need to know basis' only. Guidance about sharing information can be found in the **2026 Information Sharing Duty statutory guidance** and the **Data protection guidance for schools (2024)**. The school understands the need to keep child protection and safeguarding records securely. **[School should set out here how child protection records are stored within their school setting.]**

Staff cannot promise children confidentiality but must always act in the best interests of the child and share disclosures made by the child or others with the Designated Safeguarding Lead. All staff are aware that they have a professional responsibility to share information with other agencies in order to safeguard children.

Where appropriate to do so, the school will aim to inform or discuss with parents before sharing information with other agencies, or as soon as possible afterwards, however the Information Sharing Duty states that schools and other agencies can share relevant information without requiring the consent of a parent/carer.

The school pays due regard to the relevant data protection principles which allow us to share personal information, as provided for in the **Data Protection Act 2018** and the **General Data Protection Regulation** (GDPR), but is aware that from 30th September 2026 the Information Sharing Duty will take precedent.

The school is aware of the processing conditions under the Data Protection Act 2018 and the GDPR which allow school to store and share information for safeguarding purposes, including information which is sensitive and personal, and this is treated as "*special category personal data*".

"Data Protection Laws do not prevent the sharing of information for the purposes of keeping children safe and promoting their welfare…
…Fears about sharing information must not be allowed to stand in the way of the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children" (DfE 2026)

The school will transfer records securely to the next setting and discuss the child's needs before the child starts at the next setting. The Designated Safeguarding Lead will speak to their counterpart in the school to which the child is transferring in order to ensure that they are aware that the file is to be transferred. Upon confirmation of the child starting on roll the file should be transferred as soon as possible (within 5 school days), but separately to the main school file. The file should be signed upon receipt and delivered by hand wherever possible. School will follow the transfer of records protocol detailed within the Schools' Safeguarding Handbook.

The school will retain records in keeping with Local Authority guidance and NSPCC guidelines: **https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/research-resources/briefings/child-protection-records-retention-storage-guidance**. This in turn references the Information and Records Management Society (IRMS) **Information management toolkit for schools 2019**.

SIL's Safeguarding Handbook provides further key guidance for transferring records including a "Transfer of CP records Template".

14. Additional child protection guidance will be provided to all adults working with young people which will include::

- The school's child protection policy which includes the role of the Designated Safeguarding Lead
- Part 1 and Annex A of Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026
- The School's Code of Conduct for staff and volunteers
- The school's behaviour policy for children
- The name, role and contact details of all staff with safeguarding responsibilities
- Guidance for safer working practices for those working with children and young people in education settings (Safer Recruitment Consortium 2022)
- A flowchart summarising the child protection procedures
- Definitions of abuse or neglect and possible indicators
- Identified groups of children more vulnerable to abuse
- Specific guidance related to safeguarding issues including Female Genital Mutilation, Forced Marriage, Child Exploitation including sexual and criminal, Extremism and Radicalisation, Neglect, Sexual violence and harassment and online-safety
- Dealing with allegations against staff and volunteers procedures
- Whistleblowing procedures
- What to do if you are worried a child is being abused: Advice for practitioners DFE 2015

School should set out here any other specific areas of need relevant to the school setting and/or local context or community e.g. SEN/Disability, issues regarding criminal exploitation, neglect, attendance, etc.

15. Managing allegations against adults (including all staff, supply teachers, trainee teachers and volunteers) working at or on behalf of the school

All school staff and other adults working at or on behalf of the school will be aware of and work within the school's Code of Conduct and other relevant policies and procedures. The Staff Code of Conduct includes guidance for staff regarding the school expectations of the use of mobile phones, electronic equipment and social media.

All staff and volunteers must report any concerns about a member of staff's behaviour towards children (including supply staff and volunteers) to the Headteacher who will act as the case manager. Concerns can also be discussed with the Designated Safeguarding Lead. Concerns about the headteacher should be raised with the Chair of Governors or nominated governor.

Local Safeguarding Children Partnership multi-agency procedures will be followed in all cases where it is alleged that a member of staff has:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child;
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child;
- Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children; or
- Behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children

The school's managing allegations against staff and volunteers policy and procedures will support everyone to take appropriate action. This includes a flowchart to guide colleagues thinking.

In some circumstances, the school will have to consider an allegation against an individual who is not directly employed by the organisation and where our disciplinary procedures do not fully apply (for example supply teachers). Whilst the school is not the employer of the individual, we still have responsibility to ensure allegations are dealt with properly and will liaise where appropriate with relevant parties. The school will not cease to use the services of a supply teacher as a result of safeguarding concerns, without finding out the facts and liaising with the LADO to determine a suitable outcome.

In addition, SIL provide an online resource "Safeguarding-Mate" to support colleagues decision making: **www.sil-ltd.co.uk/safeguarding-mate**.

Concerns can also be taken directly to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), if needed. **[school to insert local LADO contact details here]**

Part 4 of the DfE guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education provides further guidance. In addition to the school's own procedures, multi-agency procedures can be found on the school's website.

There are occasions when a person who works with children behaves in a way that is concerning and raises questions about their ability to recognise and take steps to safeguard children in their care that may not always meet the threshold of LADO. As an employer the school has a duty to consider whether the issue indicates that they are unsuitable to continue in their role for the immediate future or indefinitely. These are known as issues of suitability and if they do not meet the harm threshold for allegations they, would be dealt with via the school's disciplinary and low-level concerns procedures.

Issues of suitability can include:

- Where an employee is being investigated for an offence against an adult, or
- Their behaviour in their personal lives brings into question their suitability to work with children

However if an adult who works with children has involvement from Children's Services in respect of their own child, or a child that they live with or have contact with, it is the responsibility of Children's Services to assess the immediate concern and inform the LADO of whether the adult poses a risk to children.

Examples of this may include:

- Allegations of assault, physical or emotional, on their own child or on a child they live with or have contact with
- Domestic abuse
- Substance misuse
- Lives with or is in a relationship with a person who is identified as a risk to children

The situation would meet the threshold of LADO should the child in question be made subject to a Child Protection plan. This is because Children's Services has determined that the adult presents a risk to the associated child either directly or due to a failure to protect.

If school are made aware of any of the circumstances detailed above, they will have a consultation with the LADO in order to determine whether the threshold is met for a referral under the managing allegations process.

All staff should ensure that they disclose information about themselves relating to the above to the Headteacher as soon as possible. School will create an environment and culture where staff are supported and empowered to be able to do this.

If the school receives an allegation relating to an incident that happened when an individual or organisation was using their school premises for the purpose of running activities for children (for example community groups, sports associations, or service providers that run extra-curricular activities), the school will follow its own policies and procedures, including informing the LADO.

16. Low-Level Concerns

School must develop this section and should set out their own specific procedures and protocol for managing low-level concerns including who such concerns should be reported to (KCSIE suggests this could be the Designated Safeguarding Lead or the Headteacher, although where it is the DSL, they should inform the headteacher in a timely fashion and the headteacher should be the ultimate decision maker, however it is for the school to determine their own process), and how they will be recorded and stored within school (use of personnel files?), and the retention policy for such concerns. The Farrer and Co document regarding developing a low-level concerns policy can guide thinking.

Our school recognises that there may be times when there are concerns about a professional's behaviour which do not meet the harm threshold as set out in section 15 of this policy. This includes third party staff and volunteers. Concerns such as this may arise in several ways and from a number of sources.

Examples of this may be:

- Suspicion, complaint or disclosure made by a child, parent or other adult within or outside of our school; or
- As a result of vetting checks undertaken during recruitment

Our school promotes an open and transparent culture in which all concerns about adults working in or on behalf of the school are dealt with promptly and appropriately. Creating this culture in which all concerns are shared responsibly, in a timely way with the right person, and are recorded and dealt with appropriately is critical to effective safeguarding practice.

This culture enables the school to identify concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour at the earliest possible stage, minimises the risk of abuse and ensures that all adults working in or on behalf of the school are clear about professional boundaries and act within these, in accordance with our ethos and values. This culture also empowers individuals to share concerns with key staff about their own behaviour at the earliest possible opportunity.

The term 'low-level concern' does not mean that the behaviour is insignificant. It means a behaviour towards a child which does not meet the threshold set out in section 15 of this policy and part 4 of Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026. A low-level concern is any concern (no matter how small, and even if no more than causing a sense of unease) that an adult working in or on behalf of the school may have acted in a way that:

- Is not consistent with the staff code of conduct, including conduct outside of the workplace, and/or
- Does not meet the allegations threshold or is otherwise not considered serious enough for a referral to the LADO.

Examples of such behaviour could include, but are not limited to:

- Being over friendly with children;
- Having favourites;
- Taking photographs of children on their mobile phone;
- Engaging with a child on a one-to-one basis in a secluded area or behind a closed door; or,
- Humiliating children.

Behaviours which are not consistent with the standards and values of our school, and which do not meet the expectations set out in our code of conduct for staff, must be addressed. Behaviours such as this, can exist on a spectrum from inadvertent or thoughtless, or behaviour that may look to be inappropriate, but might not be in specific circumstances, through to that which is ultimately intended to enable abuse.

It is essential that concerns such as this are shared responsibly and with the right person, and that they are recorded and dealt with appropriately. Effective reporting and management of such concerns also protects staff from potential false allegations of misunderstandings. Concerns should be shared as soon as is reasonably possible, and ideally within 24 hours of becoming aware of a problem, however it is never too late to share a concern.

Occasionally a member of staff may find themselves in a situation which could be misinterpreted or may appear compromising to others. Equally, a member of staff may have behaved in a manner which, on reflection, they consider to fall below the standards set out within our code of conduct for staff. Self-reporting such circumstances is actively encouraged as it allows issues to be dealt with at the earliest opportunity and it is an important means of maintaining our culture of everyone aspiring to have the highest standards of conduct and behaviour.

Staff do not need to be able to determine whether their concern is a low-level concern, or if it would be dealt with under our managing allegations policy. Staff must simply by empowered to share their concern. The determination regarding process will be made by the designated safeguarding lead and headteacher **[school to set out their process for this]**.

Low-level concerns should be reported in writing to the Headteacher. Where a low-level concern is in relation to the Headteacher, it should be shared with the Chair of Governors.

If a report of a low-level concern is received, it will be dealt with responsively, sensitively, and proportionately. Where a concern is reported, the Headteacher should collect as much evidence as possible by speaking directly with the person who raised the concern (unless it has been raised anonymously), and by speaking to the individual involved along with any witnesses. The information collected will help to categorise the behaviour and determine what further action may needed to be taken. Support and advice will be provided to ensure any identified behaviours can be corrected at an early stage.

All low-level concerns will be recorded in writing, and this record should include the details of the concern, the context and the action taken, including the rationale for any decisions. Records must be kept confidential and held securely in line with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK General Data Protection Regulation. Records will be kept in individual personnel files and will be retained for the duration of the individual's employment. **[School should set out here their process for recording such concerns, whether they will be retained within staff personnel files, etc, and how long they will be retained for e.g. the duration of their employment.]**

Records should be reviewed so that potential patterns of concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour can be identified. Where a pattern of such behaviour is identified, school will decide on a course of action either through our disciplinary procedures or where a pattern of behaviour moves from a concern to meeting the harms threshold, referral to LADO.

The Headteacher will regularly review all low-level concerns reported to them, along with the outcome of the concern. This is to ensure there is appropriate scrutiny and analysis of information in order to agree at what point a series of low-level concerns or a pattern of behaviour would escalate and meet the threshold set out in section 15 of this policy and part 4 of Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026. **[School to include specific detail here of how often these meetings will occur e.g. after any concern is raised, weekly, monthly, etc.]**

Low-level concerns will not be included in references unless they relate to an issue which would normally be included in a reference. Keeping Children Safe in Education specifies: *"Schools and colleges should only provide substantiated safeguarding concerns/allegations (including a group of low-level concerns about the same individual) that meet the harm threshold in references."*

Locally, it has been agreed that all concerns will be shared with the LADO relating to the conduct of an adult where sexual harm or sexualised behaviours have been reported, regardless of whether they are a low-level concern or not. This is to ensure that concerning patterns of low-level sexualised behaviour can be identified and responded to appropriately.

17. Allegations of abuse against another pupil (child-on-child abuse), including issues of harmful sexual behaviour, sexual violence and harassment

School must set out within this section their own specific procedures for managing allegations of abuse against another pupil, including the school's response to and monitoring of harmful sexual behaviour, sexual violence and sexual harassment. A model policy cannot set out school specific arrangements, therefore the key points to consider are:

- How staff should respond to reports or observations of child-on-child abuse (and what this might look like)
- Reporting procedures; how staff should report, when and to whom
- How children should report any concerns, and how this is promoted and made clear to children
- How incidents will link to the school's behaviour policy for children
- When and how incidents may be reported to the police
- How each incident will be treated on a case-by-case basis, including any use of sanctions
- How school will complete relevant risk assessments

- Examples of interventions with potential victims and/or offenders
- How all involved (victims, perpetrators and others) will be supported by the school
- If the school or college may decide a referral to statutory services is not needed but those involved may benefit from family help how this will be provided by the setting.
- How the PSHE/RSHE curriculum is tailored to be fully inclusive and developed to be age and stage of development appropriate (especially when considering the needs of children with SEND and disabilities and other vulnerabilities)
- How the PSHE/RSHE curriculum proactively responds to preventing such issues from occurring and addresses incidents should they arise. This should include how children will be taught about appropriate behaviours and how school will evidence the impact.
- How school takes into consideration that some pupils or students may be more at risk of harm from specific issues such as sexual violence, homophobic, biphobia or transphobic bullying or racial discrimination. Such concerns will differ between education settings, but it is important that schools are conscious of disproportionate vulnerabilities in their setting and integrate this into their safeguarding policies and procedures.
- What information is shared with staff to enable them to respond appropriately e.g. training

Our school adopts a whole school approach to safeguarding, which creates a culture where there is a zero-tolerance approach to harmful sexual behaviour (HSB), sexual violence and sexual harassment. This culture ensures that behaviours such as this at any level are never deemed acceptable and will not be tolerated in our school. We deliver a strong preventative education programme which creates an environment in which all children are supportive and respectful of each other.

Staff should recognise that children are capable of abusing other children, and that not all children will find it easy to tell staff about their abuse verbally. Children can show signs or act in ways that they hope adults will notice and react to. In some cases, the victim may not make a direct report, for example a friend may make a report or a member of staff may overhear a conversation. It is essential that all victims are reassured that they are being taken seriously, regardless of how long it has taken them to come forward, and that they will be supported and kept safe. Victims will never be given the impression that they are creating a problem by reporting an incident and they will never be made to feel ashamed or their experience minimised. Abuse that occurs online or outside of the school environment will be treated with equal seriousness.

The DfE states ***"The way a school or college initially responds to a report from a child is incredibly important. A supportive and respectful response can empower victims to come forward, whilst a poor response may discourage further disclosures."***

Staff must act on the assumption that children may be experiencing sexual violence or harassment, even if there are no specific reports of such behaviour. Staff must ensure that they challenge any form of derogatory and sexualised language or behaviour as failing to do so can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviour, misogyny and an unsafe environment. Staff should be vigilant to sexualised/aggressive touching/grabbing, particularly towards girls or other vulnerable groups of children. Behaviours by children should never be passed off as 'banter', 'having a laugh' or 'part of growing up' as this can lead to an unsafe culture which normalises abuse and inappropriate behaviours and can lead to children accepting it as normal and therefore not reporting such issues. Staff will challenge inappropriate behaviours, especially those potentially criminal in nature, such as grabbing bottoms, breasts and genitalia, pulling down trousers, flicking bras and lifting up skirts as dismissing or tolerating such behaviours risks normalising them. Our school will prevent sexual harassment, online sexual abuse and sexual violence through a carefully planned and sequenced relationships, sex and health education curriculum alongside effective challenge and response to specific issues when they arise. All staff will reassure victims that they are being taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe.

Children's sexual behaviour exists on a wide continuum, ranging from normal and developmentally expected to inappropriate, problematic, harmful, abusive or violent. Behaviour that is problematic, abusive or violent is developmentally inappropriate and may cause developmental damage. The umbrella term 'harmful sexual behaviour' (HSB) is widely used in child protection and applies to behaviour occurring online, face-to-face, or both. HSB should always be considered within a child protection context.

HSB can, in some cases, progress on a continuum. Early intervention in inappropriate behaviour such as misogyny can help to prevent escalation to more serious abuse such as sexual harassment and sexual violence. Children who display HSB have often experienced their own abuse and trauma. It is important that they are offered appropriate support and our school will ensure that we intervene at the earliest possible stage.

Whilst we recognised that it is likely that for some forms of child-on-child abuse (but not all), girls are more likely to be victims and boys the perpetrators, we are aware that this is not always the case therefore staff understand that any behaviours linked to child-on-child abuse are unacceptable and all reports will be taken seriously and in line with this policy.

All concerns must be reported and discussed with the Designated Safeguarding Lead, Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead or senior member of staff. Reports of HSB, sexual harassment and sexual violence are likely to be complex and may require swift, difficult professional decisions to be made.

Behaviours can happen in school, online or in the community and are most likely to include, but not limited to:

- Abuse within intimate personal relationships between children;
- Bullying (including cyber bullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying);
- Discriminatory behaviour, including racism, faith-targeted abuse, and other prejudice-based incidents;
- Serious violence;
- Sexual violence such as rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault (this may include an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages sexual violence);
- Sexual harassment such as sexual comments, remarks, "jokes", taunting and online sexual harassment which may be standalone or part of a broader pattern of abuse;
- Sexual comments, such as telling sexual stories, making lewd comments, making sexual remarks about clothes and appearance and calling someone sexualised names.
- Physical behaviour, such as deliberately brushing against someone, interfering with someone's clothes.
- Harmful sexual behaviour, including misogyny, sexual violence and sexual harassment;
- Displaying pictures, photos or drawings of a sexual nature;
- Causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent, such as forcing someone to strip, touch themselves sexually or to engage in sexual activity with a third party;
- Online sexual harassment including consensual and non-consensual sharing of self-generated intimate images (known as nudes or semi-nudes) and/or videos including those generated using AI e.g. deepfakes, sharing of unwanted explicit content, AI generated CSAM, sexualised online bullying, unwanted sexual comments and messages including on social media, sexual exploitation, coercion and threats and coercing others into sharing images of themselves or performing acts they are not comfortable with online;
- Upskirting, which typically involves taking a picture under a person's clothing without their permission (this is a criminal offence);
- Physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm;
- Physical assault and harm, or the threat of harm with a weapon; and

- Initiation/hazing type violence and rituals (this could include activities involving harassment, abuse or humiliation used as a way of initiating a person into a group and many also include an online element).

Such behaviours can violate a child's dignity, make them feel intimidated, degraded or humiliated and create a hostile, offensive or sexualised environment.

When responding to reports of child-on-child abuse, the Designated Safeguarding Lead will respond to each report on a case-by-case basis using their professional judgement and supported by external agencies such as children's social care or the police as needed. If an allegation is potentially criminal in nature, a report will be made to the Police. This will generally be in parallel to a referral to children's services. School can refer to the NPCC guidance **When to call the Police** for additional support.

Initial responses to reports of HSB, sexual violence or harassment are likely to include:

- If possible, managing reports with two members of staff present, (preferably one of them being the designated safeguarding lead or a deputy)
- Careful handling and management of reports that include an online element. This includes being aware of **Searching, screening and confiscation: advice for schools** and **DfSIT & UKCIS Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people 2024**. Staff should not view or forward illegal images of a child. The above advice provides more details on what to do when viewing an image is unavoidable. In some cases, it may be more appropriate to confiscate any devices to preserve any evidence and hand them to the police for inspection
- Not promising confidentiality at this initial stage as it is very likely a concern will have to be shared further (for example, with the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) or local authority children's social care) to discuss next steps. Staff should only share the report with those people who are necessary in order to progress it. It is important that the victim understands what the next steps will be and who the report will be passed to
- Recognising that a child is likely to disclose to someone they trust: this could be anyone within the school or college staff. Staff should recognise the significance of being chosen as a confidant and respond with empathy
- Recognising that an initial disclosure may not reflect the full extent of abuse, and that trauma can impact memory meaning details may be affected
- Keeping in mind that certain children may face additional barriers to disclosure especially for children with vulnerabilities related to disability, sex, ethnicity, or sexual orientation
- Listening carefully to the child, reflecting back, using the child's language, avoiding judgement, being clear about boundaries and how the report will be progressed, and asking only open-ended questions - such as where, when, what, etc. It is important to note that whilst leading questions should be avoided, staff can ask children if they have been harmed and what the nature of that harm was
- Considering the best way to record the report. Ideally, staff should wait until the end of the conversation to write a detailed summary, allowing the staff member to give the child their full attention. If notes are taken during the report, especially when a second staff member is present, care must be taken to remain engaged and not appear distracted. It is essential a written record is made.
- Record only what the child says, without interpretation or personal opinion. These notes may be used in statutory assessments and/or criminal investigations, and
- If the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy), is not present during the report, they must be informed as soon as practically possible.

The school recognises that Artificial Intelligence (AI) can be used to alter existing photos or videos or by creating entirely AI generated sexual images. There are also AI tools such as "nudifying" or "undress" tools which can be used to digitally remove clothing to create sexual images. Under UK law AI generated child sexual abuse material (AI-CSAM) is illegal under Section 1 of the **Protection of Children Act 1978**, regardless of how it is created or its photorealism. Should it be required, we will refer to the Internet Watch Foundation, National Crime Agency and CEOP's **AI CSAM Guide for Professionals** for further guidance when responding to incidents of this nature.

Children with special educational needs and disabilities are more vulnerable to sexual violence and harassment and staff should be aware that additional barriers can exist when recognising abuse in these children. The fact that a child or a young person may be LGBT is not in itself an inherent risk factor for harm however children who are LGBT+ or perceived to be, may also be targeted by their peers and harassed or assaulted. Risks can be compounded where children who are LGBT lack a trusted adult with whom they can be open. It is therefore vital that all staff endeavour to reduce the additional barriers faced and provide a safe space for children to speak out or share their concerns.

Being subjected to harassment, violence and or abuse, including that of a sexual nature, may breach any or all of the protections set out under the **Human Rights Act 1998**, depending on the nature of the conduct and the circumstances. In addition, the **Public Sector Equality Duty** places a general duty on schools and colleges to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, to advance the equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not. The duty applies to all protected characteristics and specific consideration must be given to equality implications such as, for example, the need to eliminate unlawful behaviours that relate to them such as sexual violence and sexual harassment, misogyny/misandry and racism.

Victims of child-on-child sexual harm will be supported by the school's pastoral system and referred to specialist agencies including, for example, CAMHS, Brook, NSPCC and Barnardo's. When there has been a report of sexual violence, the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) will make an immediate risk and needs assessment. Where there has been a report of sexual harassment, the need for a risk assessment will be considered on a case-by-case basis. **[School should include detail here regarding their chosen method of risk assessment, e.g. The Aim Project, Brook Tool or NSPCC, and specify any training they have completed in respect of this.]** Risk assessments will be recorded (paper or electronic) and will be kept under regular review. The school curriculum will support young people to become more resilient to inappropriate behaviours towards them, risk taking behaviours and behaviours that children may be coerced into including "sexting" or "initiation/hazing" behaviours.

As part of good safeguarding practice, we will take reasonable steps to protect the anonymity of all children involved in any incidents. Amongst other things, this will include carefully deciding, based on the nature of the report, which staff need to know about the report and what support that will be provided for the children involved. We will also consider the potential impact of social media, which can spread rumours and compromise the identity of those involved.

Via our pastoral systems **[amend as appropriate]**, we will ensure that all children involved in any reports of child-on-child abuse will be supported appropriately. This will include victims, alleged perpetrators and any other children affected, for example, witnesses or siblings and will be considered within any risk assessments undertaken. **[Add specific detail of school support systems here and processes to access e.g. mental health support, pastoral support, etc.]**

Additional guidance is available on the NSPCC website:
https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/online-safety/preventing-online-abuse-and-harm

18. Children at risk of Serious Violence and/or Exploitation

All staff should be aware of the indicators which may suggest a child is at risk from or is involved with serious violent crime.

These may include:

- Increased absence from school;
- A change in friendships or relationships with older individuals or groups;
- A significant decline in performance;
- Signs of self-harm or a significant change in wellbeing; or
- Signs of assault or unexplained injuries

Unexplained gifts or new possessions could also indicate that children have been approached by, or are involved with, individuals associated with criminal networks or gangs and may be at risk of criminal exploitation.

All staff should be aware of the range of risk factors which increase the likelihood of involvement in serious violence crimes, such as increased absence from school, change in friendships or relationships with older individuals or groups, a significant decline in performance, signs of self-harm or a significant change in wellbeing and signs of assault or unexplained injuries. As well as unexplained gifts or new possessions could also indicate that children have been approached by, or are involved with, individuals associated with criminal networks or gangs and may be at risk of exploitation. The likelihood of involvement in serious violence may be increased by factors such as being male, having been frequently absent or permanently excluded from school, having experienced child maltreatment and having been involved in offending, such as theft or robbery. Additional information and advice can be found in the Home Office's **Serious Violence Duty; Preventing and reducing serious violence**, **Preventing youth violence and gang involvement** and **Criminal exploitation of children and vulnerable adults: county lines** guidance.

Engagement in education is a strong protective factor against children and young people's risk of involvement in serious violence. Through engaging in good quality education, children and young people feel a sense of belonging, achievement and are equipped with skills and resilience they need to be safe and to succeed in life. Our school recognises that we play a vital role in preventing and reducing serious violence by facilitating early interventions, prevention and safeguarding children.

Both child sexual exploitation and child criminal exploitation are forms of abuse that occur where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance in power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child into taking part in sexual or criminal activity, in exchange for something the victims needs or wants, and/or for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator and/or through violence or the threat of violence. Child sexual exploitation and child criminal exploitation can affect children, both male and female, and can include children who have been moved (commonly referred to as trafficking) for the purpose of exploitation.

Staff will understand that whilst the age of the child may be a contributing factor for an imbalance of power, there are a range of other factors that could make a child more vulnerable to exploitation, including gender, sexual identity, cognitive ability, learning difficulties, communication ability, physical strength, status, and access to economic or other resources.

All staff should be aware of the indicators which may suggest a child is at risk from or experiencing child criminal or sexual exploitation. These may include:

- Appear with unexplained gifts, money or new possessions;
- Associate with other children involved in exploitation;

- Have been the victim or perpetrator or alleged perpetrator of serious violence (e.g. knife crime);
- Suffer from changes in emotional wellbeing;
- Misuse drugs and alcohol;
- Go missing for periods of time (from school or home) and are subsequently found in areas away from their home or school;
- Are found in accommodation that they have no connection with; and
- Regularly miss school or education or do not take part in education.

All staff will be aware that children who are involved in criminal exploitation often commit crimes themselves, therefore their vulnerability as victims is not always recognised by adults and professionals. They may still have been exploited even if the activity appears to be something they have agreed or consented to. Staff will also have an understanding of the fact that the experience of girls who are criminally exploited can be very different to that of boys. The indicators may not be the same, however professionals should be aware that girls are at risk of exploitation too. It is also important to note that both boys and girls being criminally exploited may be at higher risk of sexual exploitation.

All staff will be aware that child sexual exploitation is child sexual abuse. Exploitation of this nature can be a one-off occurrence and may happen without the child's immediate knowledge e.g. through the sharing of videos or images. It can also affect any child who has been coerced into engaging in sexual activities. This includes 16- and 17-year-olds who can legally consent to have sex. Some children may not realise they are being exploited e.g. because they believe they are in a genuine relationship.

All staff will try to understand contextual safeguarding concerns and intelligence, such as where children may congregate out of school hours, and where serious violence may occur. We will liaise and work with other agencies to understand this risk and be part of a coordinated response to reduce risk.

Our school understands that children who have been exploited or are at risk of serious violence, will need additional support to help maintain them in education. Further guidance is provided to staff in Section 1 of the Schools' Safeguarding Handbook.

19. Domestic Abuse and Operation Encompass

All staff and volunteers are aware that domestic abuse can encompass a wide range of behaviours and may be a single incident or a pattern of incidents. That abuse can be, but is not limited to, psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional. Children can be victims of domestic abuse. They may see, hear, or experience the effects of abuse at home and/or suffer domestic abuse in their own intimate relationships (teenage relationship abuse). All of which can have a detrimental and long-term impact on their health, wellbeing, development, and ability to learn.

The **Domestic Abuse Act 2021** and Keeping Children Safe in Education recognises children as victims of Domestic Abuse in their own right and sets out statutory multi-agency responsibilities, including specific responsibilities on education providers. Amongst other things, these include how school deliver an effective PSHE / RSHE curriculum which supports children to recognise and report feelings of being unsafe, and covers the concepts of, and laws relating to, sexual consent, sexual exploitation, abuse, grooming, coercion, harassment, rape, domestic abuse, forced marriage, 'honour'-based abuse and FGM, and how these can affect current and future relationships.

School name is part of **Operation Encompass**. Operation Encompass is a national police and education early intervention safeguarding partnership which supports children and young people who experience Domestic Violence and Abuse. Operation Encompass enables every child to receive support, regardless of whether the incident has been recorded as a crime and regardless of whether there is involvement with children's services.

Operation Encompass means that the police will share information with our school about all police attended Domestic Abuse incidents which involve any of our children prior to the start of the next school day.

In order to support the school's response, key members of staff have undertaken specific training related to Operation Encompass.

Our DSL undertook training on XXXXX (date including year)
Our deputy DSL(s) undertook training on XXXXX (date including year)

Key information about the principles of Operation Encompass has been cascaded to all other school staff and Governors. This includes discussing with staff how we can support children who are experiencing Domestic Abuse on a day-to-day basis and particularly following an Operation Encompass notification. No actions taken by school will put the child/ren or adult victim at risk.

School name ensures that parents are fully aware of Operation Encompass and when a new child joins our school we ensure that the parents/carers are informed about Operation Encompass.

Operation Encompass notifications are stored in line with all other confidential safeguarding and child protection information. **[School should add information here regarding where notifications are stored and recorded e.g. CPOMS]**

All Operation Encompass data (including Missing from Home (MfH) notifications) will form part of the termly safeguarding report to Governors. All information is anonymised for these reports.

The school has used the Operation Encompass Key Adult Responsibilities checklist to ensure that all appropriate actions have been taken.

From March 2024 using Operation Encompass, Merseyside Police share information with our school about all children who are or who have been missing from home or care (MfH). The Key Adult (DSL) and their deputy/s (DDSLs) have completed the online Operation Encompass Key Adult training which contains a module about MfH. Information about MfH notifications have been shared with all other school staff and Governors. Our parents are fully aware that this information is being shared with our school.

The Operation Encompass MfH information is stored in line with all other confidential safeguarding and child protection information.

Our school has discussed how we can support our children who have gone missing and how we will act following an Operation Encompass MfH notification. Our curriculum includes work in this area. We have used the Operation Encompass Handbook on MfH to inform our thinking. We are aware that we must do nothing that puts the child/ren at risk.

[Only include the above information regarding Merseyside Police MfH notifications if your school is located within Merseyside.]

Should the Headteacher, DSL or DDSLs leave the school and other staff are appointed, **school name** will ensure that all key information shared with the new Headteacher/Key Adults and that the new member of staff will undertake the Operation Encompass online training.

20. Online safety, data protection and the use of mobile phones and digital photographic equipment

School should set out within this section their own procedures for online safety, data protection, use of mobile phones, etc. They should also link and reference their own Online Safety and Acceptable Use Policies.

It is essential that children are safeguarded from potentially harmful and inappropriate online material. Our school implements a whole school approach to online safety that sets out to protect and educate both children and staff in their use of digital technologies alongside establishing mechanisms to identify, intervene in and escalate any concerns, recognising that many children and young people have unlimited and unrestricted access to the internet via mobile phones and other digital devices.

Staff should also report any concerns about sexting (youth produced sexual imagery or 'nudes') to the Designated Safeguarding Lead, Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead or senior member of staff who will follow the guidance in **Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people** (UK Council for Child Internet Safety, December 2024). This document provides clarity as to how staff should respond to these incidents.

The school's Online/E-safety/Acceptable Use **[amend titles as appropriate]** policy clearly outlines the way in which the school uses digital technologies and there are measures in place to ensure safe, responsible and respectful use by all. This policy also includes appropriate filtering and monitoring on school devices and school networks. There is a clear code of conduct for staff and volunteers which sets out the use of digital technologies, mobile phones and personal photographic equipment around children. The school will consider, in particular, Looked after Children (Children in Care) who might be put at risk by being included in publicity materials or school photographs.

The DfE highlights the risks of new technologies:
"An effective approach to online safety empowers a school or college to protect and educate pupils, students, and staff in their use of technology and establishes mechanisms to identify, intervene in, and escalate any concerns where appropriate.

The breadth of issues classified within online safety is considerable and ever evolving, but can be categorised into four areas of risk:

- ***Content:** being exposed to illegal, inappropriate or harmful content, for example: pornography, fake news, racism, misogyny, self-harm, suicide, anti-Semitism, radicalisation, and extremism*
- ***Contact:** being subjected to harmful online interaction with other users; for example: peer to peer pressure, commercial advertising and adults posing as children or young adults with the intention to groom or exploit them for sexual, criminal, financial or other purposes*
- ***Conduct:** personal online behaviour that increases the likelihood of, or causes, harm; for example, making, sending and receiving explicit images (e.g. consensual and non-consensual sharing of nudes and semi-nudes and/or pornography, sharing other explicit images and online bullying, and*
- ***Commerce:** risks such as online gambling, inappropriate advertising, phishing and or financial scams"*

The use of technology has become a significant component of many safeguarding issues such as child sexual exploitation, criminal exploitation, radicalisation and sexual abuse. Technology often provides the platform that facilitates harm.

Schools and colleges should ensure online safety is a running and interrelated theme whilst devising and implementing policies and procedures. This will include considering how online safety is reflected as required in all relevant policies and considering online safety whilst planning the curriculum, any teacher training, the role and responsibilities of the designated safeguarding lead and any parental engagement.

Staff should bring immediately to the attention of the Headteacher, Designated Safeguarding Lead or senior leadership team any behaviours by adults or children themselves that may be risky or harmful.

Our Governing Body will ensure that our school has appropriate filters and monitoring systems in place and will regularly review their effectiveness. The school will adhere to the DfE **Meeting digital and technology standards in schools and colleges** "Filtering and monitoring standards" which sets out that schools should:

- Identify and assign roles and responsibilities to manage filtering and monitoring systems.
- Review filtering and monitoring provision at least annually.
- Block harmful and inappropriate content without unreasonably impacting teaching and learning.
- Have effective monitoring strategies in place that meet their safeguarding needs

[School should add here the systems used for filtering and monitoring within the setting, along with their process for responding to concerns.]

Our school recognises that technology, and risks and harms related to it, evolve and change rapidly. The school will carry out an annual review of our approach to online safety and will conduct a risk assessment which considers and reflects the risks our children face. **[School should specify here which self-review tool they use for this purpose, e.g. the LGfL online safety audit or 360 safe.]**

Our school recognises the significant operational and financial impacts that cyber incidents and attacks can have on schools. Our Governing Body will ensure that the school meets the DfE **Meeting digital and technology standards in schools and colleges** "Cyber security standards", which includes:

- Conducting an annual cyber risk assessment which is reviewed every term
- Creating and implementing a cyber awareness plan for staff and students
- Ensuring that digital technology and data is secured with anti-malware and a firewall
- Ensuring that user accounts and access privileges are controlled and secure
- Licensing digital technology and keeping this up to date
- Developing and implementing a plan to back up data (which is reviewed every year)
- Reporting cyber attacks

The DfE guidance **Teaching Online Safety in Schools** (2023) also outlines how schools can ensure their pupils understand how to stay safe and behave online as part of forthcoming and existing curriculum requirements.

Our school recognises that generative AI platforms are becoming more widespread and commonly used, for example, ChatGPT, Microsoft Co-Pilot, Google Gemini or Adobe Firefly. Our school follows the DfE policy paper **Generative artificial intelligence (AI) in education**, in particular:

- We will talk about the use of these tools with staff, parents and children including their practical use alongside the potential risks (particularly with reference to the risks associated with accuracy of information and the creation of sexualised images and deepfakes using self-generative AI)
- We are aware that the use of any generative AI in examinations is prohibited and will refer to our Behaviour Policy for any incidents of this nature
- We are conscious that children may have access to apps and exposure to AI creations on devices at home and these experiences may be both positive and negative

We also recognise that under UK law, AI generated child sexual abuse material (AI-CSAM) is illegal, regardless of how it is created or its photorealism. Should it be required, we will refer to the Internet Watch Foundation, National Crime Agency and CEOP's **AI CSAM Guide for Professionals** for further guidance. We share more detail and clarity about generative AI in our Online Safety policy, including the approach to the use of generative AI in our school.

Where children are asked to learn online at home, our school ensures this is done safely by referencing key guidance such as Providing remote education: guidance for schools, **Safeguarding and remote education** and advice from LGfL.

21. Children requiring mental health support

Our school recognises that it has an important role to play in supporting the mental health and wellbeing of our students. Staff recognise where children have suffered abuse and neglect, or other potentially traumatic adverse childhood experiences, this can have a lasting impact throughout childhood, adolescence and into adulthood. Our staff are aware of how these children's experiences, can impact on their mental health, behaviour, attendance and progress at school. We recognise that in some cases, mental health problems can be an indicator that a child has suffered, or is at risk of suffering abuse, neglect or exploitation. Staff are aware of the clear systems and processes in place for identifying possible mental health problems, including routes to escalate and clear referral and accountability systems. **[School should insert here their systems and processes.]**

Staff are also aware that mental health problems can, in some cases, develop into safeguarding concerns. This could include self-harm, signs of an eating disorder, suicidal ideation or suicide. They could be an indicator that a child has suffered or is at risk of suffering abuse, neglect or exploitation.

The designated safeguarding lead will regularly liaise with the senior mental health lead where safeguarding concerns are linked to mental health, or mental health concerns become safeguarding concerns, to ensure there is an effective and appropriate response by school. Within our school we adopt a whole school approach to mental health and wellbeing, which includes promoting positive mental health, wellbeing and resilience across the whole school community. **[Schools should insert here detail about their whole school approach and links to school policy/system/processes for identifying possible mental health problems which include escalation routes and referral and accountability systems along with details of who the named senior mental health lead is.]**

Our Senior Mental Health Lead is: [insert name and role here]

22. Monitoring attendance

Children who are absent from education particularly repeatedly and/or for prolonged periods, and children missing education can act as a vital warning sign of a range of safeguarding possibilities. This may include abuse and neglect such as sexual abuse or exploitation and can also be a sign of child criminal exploitation including involvement in county lines. It may indicate mental health problems, risk of substance abuse, risk of travelling to conflict zones, risk of female genital mutilation, so called 'honour'-based abuse or risk of forced marriage. Early intervention is essential to identify the existence of any underlying safeguarding risk and to help prevent the risks of a child going missing in future. All our staff are aware of their school or college's unauthorised absence procedures and children missing education procedures.

Local Authority guidance and procedures will be followed for dealing with a child who is missing from education, particularly on repeated occasions or if a child suddenly stops attending. The school will follow the **pan-Merseyside / pan-Cheshire / Greater Manchester** missing children protocol. For those children and families who have chronic poor attendance or severe or persistent absenteeism, school will consider whether educational neglect is present and whether a referral to children's services is required, or whether the school should begin a Family Help Assessment in order to coordinate a multi-agency plan of support for the child and family. School will ensure that our response is in line with **Working together to improve school attendance** DfE 2022 (updated 2024). Attendance will be closely monitored. In line with the school's attendance policy, the attendance of children with known welfare and attendance concerns will be monitored closely, particularly those with unexplainable and/or persistent and severe absences, or if a child suddenly stops attending.

Schools should also scrutinise the attendance of off-site provision to ensure children are attending and are safe. Similarly, the attendance of children who are vulnerable or with known welfare and safeguarding concerns such as children who have a child protection plan, a child in need, are Children Looked After and/or SEN will be rigorously monitored on a daily and weekly basis. The child's social worker will be informed immediately when there are unexplained absences or attendance concerns. **[Delete the following sentence if school does not have EYFS classes]** In line with the EYFS statutory framework, children that are not yet statutory school age will also be contacted on their first day of absence, and particularly if the child is absent for a prolonged period of time. This is reflected within our attendance policy.

It is important that the school's attendance team, including the EWO, school nurse and Safer Schools Officer, are aware of any safeguarding concerns. It is critical that when a child is not attending school their welfare is confirmed and expected practice would be for an appropriate professional to visit the home and speak to the child alone, particularly if there are any safeguarding concerns. The timing for this home visit will be determined on a case-by-case basis. The school will seek to ensure it has at least three emergency contacts for each family and consider what urgent action it may need to take when a vulnerable child and family are not contactable and the child has not attended school. Where necessary, this may include reporting the child missing to the police. The school will ensure it is aware, in advance, of any difficulties in accessing the premises of a child's family home.

Due to the clear link between attendance and safeguarding, the Designated Safeguarding Lead and Designated Attendance Lead will meet regularly in order to analyse and discuss data and agree future action in respect of vulnerable children.

It is essential that all staff are alert to signs to look out for and the individual triggers to be aware of when considering the risks of potential safeguarding concerns such as travelling to conflict zones, Female Genital Mutilation and forced marriage.

Where children are experiencing social, emotional or mental health issues and this is impacting on their attendance, school will refer to DfE guidance **Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools**.

Children Missing Education (CME) are children of compulsory school age who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school. All staff should be aware that children missing education are at significant risk of underachieving, being victims of harm, exploitation or radicalisation, and becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training) later in life. Children going missing can also be an indicator of mental health problems, risk of substance abuse, risk of travelling to conflict zones, risk of female genital mutilation or risk of forced marriage. Effective information sharing between parents, schools and local authorities is critical to ensuring that all children of compulsory school age are safe and receiving suitable education.

Maintained schools have a safeguarding duty in respect of their pupils, and as part of this should investigate any unexplained absences. Academies and independent schools have a similar safeguarding duty for their pupils. When a child is deemed to be missing from education, school will make reasonable enquiries to establish the whereabouts of the child jointly with the local authority, before deleting the pupil's name from the register. Once these enquiries have been undertaken, our school will follow the local protocol for Children Missing Education and make a CME referral to the Local Authority Officer for CME.

Some parents will decide to remove their child from the school role in order to educate them at home. For the majority of children, this choice will be with the child's best education at the heart of their decision and it will be a positive learning experience. However, this is not the case for all.

Elective home education can mean that some children are not in receipt of suitable education and are less visible to the services that are there to keep them safe and supported in line with their needs. Where a parent or carer has expressed their intention to remove their child from the school roll with a view to educating at home, the school will work together with other key professionals and will, where possible, attempt to facilitate a meeting. This would be before a final decision has been made, to ensure the parents/carers have considered what is in the best interests of each child. This is particularly important where a child has special educational needs or a disability, and/or has a social worker, and/or is otherwise vulnerable. Where a child has an Education, Health and Care plan local authorities will need to review the plan, working closely with parents and carers. The school will also link with the named officer for Elective Home Education within the Local Authority.

23. Private fostering

The Children Act 1989, 2004 and Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005 set out that Private Fostering occurs when a child under the age of 16 (under 18, if disabled) is provided with care and accommodation by a person who is not a parent, person with parental responsibility for them or a relative in their own home. A child is not privately fostered if the person caring for and accommodating them has done so for less than 28 days and does not intend to do so for longer.

Our school has a mandatory duty to report to the local authority if they believe a child is subject to a private fostering arrangement. (This does not include close family relatives e.g. grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or auntie.) This means making a referral to children's services. A private fostering arrangement is made without the knowledge of the local authority for the care of a child under the age of 16 years (under 18 for children with disabilities) whereby the child is in the care of someone other than their parent or close relative. Further guidance is available in Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 and in **Children Act 1989 private fostering**. When a child is privately fostered a social worker must carry out an assessment to ensure the placement is appropriate and consider any support needed.

Additional guidance on private fostering can be found **here**.

24. Safer recruitment

The school will ensure that all appointments (including volunteers) follow its recruitment policy and the guidance set out in Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026. At least one member of the appointments panel will have undertaken safer recruitment training. The school will undertake all of the required DfE pre-employments checks and where appropriate will record these checks on the single central record and retain evidence in personnel files. The school will seek written confirmation that third-party organisations including contractor and alternative education providers have undertaken appropriate checks. The school's Safer Recruitment Policy and Procedures set out the processes in more detail and are drawn from SIL's Safeguarding Handbook.

The school is required to inform relevant staff who fall within the scope of **Disqualification under the Childcare Act 2006** and establish they are not disqualified. The criteria for disqualification under the 2006 Act and the 2018 Regulations includes inclusion on the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Children's Barred List or committing a relevant offence. **[School should delete this paragraph if their setting does not fall under the remit of the Childcare Act 2006]**

25. The Safeguarding Curriculum

School should set out within this section specific examples of their own safeguarding curriculum.

The school will ensure it has a curriculum map which sets out how to help children keep themselves safe from harm. This will include messages which are taught through the **Relationships education, relationships and sex education (RSE) and health education** and PSHE curriculums, alongside standalone pieces of work and messages delivered through other curriculum areas, as part of a broad and balanced curriculum. Preventative education is most effective in the context of a whole-school approach that prepares pupils and students for life in modern Britain. Our children will be provided with a safeguarding curriculum which is fully inclusive and developed to be age and stage developmentally appropriate (especially when considering the needs of children with SEND, disabilities and other vulnerabilities), and will include age-appropriate skills, knowledge and understanding to help them recognise and respond to issues such as consent and healthy and respectful relationships.

Children will be supported to develop their understanding, at the appropriate age, of risks including when using technology, the internet, and risks associated with grooming and radicalisation, gang and criminal exploitation and misusing drugs and alcohol. The curriculum will include specific sequenced lessons to address sexual harassment, online abuse, sexual violence and issues of consent in an age and stage appropriate way. Our school recognises that a one size fits all approach may not be appropriate for all children, and a more personalised approach for more vulnerable children, victims of abuse and some SEND children may be necessary. Children will also learn about the wider safeguarding curriculum which for children would include road safety, anti-bullying and know how to seek support when needed. The school will ensure the curriculum promotes an understanding of the values needed to live within a democratic society including the rule of law, and individual liberty. It will promote tolerance and respect for all faiths (and those of no faith), races, genders, ages, disability and sexual orientations. The safeguarding curriculum is under constant review to protect our children, taking a reflective approach using safeguarding patterns identified in school and the local area to inform necessary changes.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead will work closely with the PSHE/RSHE/RSE lead to ensure a consistent approach to delivering key safeguarding messages throughout the curriculum, and that the curriculum appropriately reflects and responds to the needs of the school community.

26. Safeguarding children who attend off-site alternative provision

School should set out within this section their own procedures for managing and safeguarding children who access off site alternative provision.

When identifying that a child would benefit from attending off site provision, our school will undertake an assessment to determine that this placement is in the best interests of the child. We will ensure that the provision identified is suitable to meet the needs of that child and will undertake full due diligence to ensure any identified provision is appropriate and safe. The school will retain responsibility for the safeguarding of any pupils we place in off-site provision. The school will undertake appropriate quality assurance checks to ensure that it is a safe place for the child to attend and will draw upon the specific guidance in the Schools' Safeguarding Handbook relating to this. The school will obtain written confirmation from the provider that the appropriate safeguarding checks have been carried out in respect of individuals working at the establishment. The school will have a formal agreement with the alternative provision and parent/carer regarding when the pupil should attend and what procedures that will be followed should the child not attend the placement. The school will ensure it seeks the views of the young people at off-site provision to ensure they feel happy and safe. When commissioning places at alternative provision, the school will pay due regard to **Working together to improve school attendance**, **Alternative provision – DfE Statutory Guidance** and **Education for children with health needs who cannot attend school – DfE Statutory Guidance**.

Our school is responsible for the safeguarding and welfare of pupils who are educated off site. We will ensure that the appropriate coding is used within attendance registers. If we use the B code, we have confirmed that the child is attending an education provision that is supervised, and measures have been taken to safeguard the pupil. We will ensure that we have arrangements in place where the provider of the provision will notify the school of any absences. Our attendance policy will be followed in these circumstances.

27. Complaints and Whistleblowing

Complaints about safeguarding should follow the school's complaints policy.

The school recognises that children cannot be expected to raise concerns in an environment where staff fail to do so.

All staff should be aware of their duty to raise concerns, where they exist, which may include the attitude or actions of colleagues. The school's Whistleblowing Policy is there to support and aid them in these circumstances. The Local Authority also has whistleblowing procedures.

Whistleblowing regarding the Headteacher should be made to the Chair of the Governing Body, whose contact details should be readily available to staff.

Where a staff member feels unable to raise an issue with their employer, or feels that their genuine concerns are not being addressed, other whistleblowing channels are open to them:

- General advice on whistleblowing can be found at **whistleblowing for employees**
- The NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line is available as an alternative route for staff who do not feel able to raise concerns regarding child protection failures internally or have concerns about the way a concern is being handled by their school or college. Staff can call 0800 028 0285 – and the line is available from 08:00 to 20:00 Monday to Friday, and 09:00 to 18:00 at weekends. The email address is **help@nspcc.org.uk**.

28. Escalation and resolution

If any member of staff is unhappy with the response they have received in relation to a safeguarding concern they have raised, it is their responsibility to ensure they escalate their concern within the organisation. All members of staff are aware of their responsibility to escalate and refer concerns on to Children's Services when it is appropriate to do so.

Where professional disagreement occurs and the Designated Safeguarding Lead and/or Deputy are unhappy with the actions or decisions of another agency, they will escalate their concern in line with the Local Safeguarding Children Partnership's formal escalation policy to ensure a timely resolution, which can be found here: **[school to add a link to their local LSCP escalation procedure]**

The first step of any escalation process with another agency is to raise any concerns directly with the other professional and their line manager. A professionals meeting is always a positive way of resolving differences and remaining focussed on the outcomes for the child.

29. Proactive Safeguarding

Our school recognises that school plays a significant part in the prevention of harm to our children by providing them with opportunities to learn, good lines of communication with trusted adults, supportive peers and an ethos of protection. As a result, safeguarding and child protection is at the heart of everything and underpins all policy and procedures within our school.

Our school recognises that we may provide the only stability in the lives of children who have been abused or who are at risk of harm.

Our school recognises that safeguarding incidents and/or behaviours can be associated with factors outside the school or can occur between children outside the school. All staff, but especially the Designated Safeguarding Lead and deputy should consider the context within which such incidents or behaviours occur. This is known as contextual safeguarding, or extra-familial harm, which means assessments of children should consider whether wider environmental factors are present in a child's life that are a threat to their safety and/or welfare.

In order to maintain a whole school approach to safeguarding, our school community will:

- Work to establish and maintain an ethos where children feel secure and are encouraged to talk and are always listened to. This ethos will be modelled and replicated by staff and governors.
- Promote a caring, safe and positive environment within the school.
- Ensure that the school site is a safe, secure and welcoming place to learn and grow.
- Encourage self-esteem and self-assertiveness through the curriculum as well as through personal relationships, whilst not condoning aggression or bullying.
- Include regular consultation with children e.g. through safety questionnaires, participation in anti-bullying week, etc.
- Ensure that all children know there is an adult in the school whom they can approach if they are worried or in difficulty.
- Include safeguarding messages across the full curriculum, including RSHE/PSHE, to ensure that the children are equipped with the skills they need to recognise risky behaviours, stay safe from harm and to know to whom they should turn for help. In particular this will include **[include detail here specific to your school setting]** e.g. staying safe online, anti-bullying, e-safety, road safety, pedestrian and cycle training, focused work in Year 6 to prepare for transition to Secondary school and more personal safety/independent travel, issues around consent, sexting, positive mental health, etc.
- Offer a positive school experience.
- Ensure all staff are aware of school guidance for their use of mobile technology and have discussed safeguarding issues around the use of mobile technologies and their associated risks
- Ensure that all staff, volunteers, governors, policies and procedures operate with the best interests of the child at their heart.

30. Schools with early years classes

[Please only include this section if you are a setting that has to adhere to the Early Years Foundation Stage framework. Where this section is applicable, schools may wish to move it further up within their policy. Schools to whom this does not apply should delete this section from their policy]

In addition to complying with the statutory guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education, our school must also adhere to the Early Years foundation stage, in particular the safeguarding requirements within the framework. **School name** will ensure that:

- All people looking after children will be suitable people. They will have the relevant qualifications and training and will have passed any required checks to fulfil their roles. We will take the appropriate steps to verify qualifications. We will seek (and provide) references that comment on the candidate's suitability to work with children. We will obtain enhanced criminal records checks and where relevant, overseas criminal checks. We will ensure that no adults are disqualified under the Childcare Act 2006. We will record the details of these checks on our Single Central Record. Further detail is set out within our Safer Recruitment policy and procedures.
- Safeguarding training for staff will cover information relating to the specific needs of the age and stage of our EYFS cohort and content will include the requirements set out within the EYFS framework.
- If a child is absent from the setting, we will follow the procedures set out within our Attendance policy. This includes making contact on the first day of absence and following up prolonged absences, regardless of whether the child is statutory school age.

- Staff working with children in the early years will be expected to leave all mobile or electronic devices with imaging and sharing capabilities in **[school to add details of where electronic devices should be stored during the working day e.g. staff room, or lockers]** This is in line with our staff code of conduct and safer working practices. Only official school devices will be permitted in the early years areas of our school.
- • If children will sleep whilst on the premises, the school will ensure there are appropriate and safe spaces for this to happen and will ensure that sleeping children are frequently checked by staff.
- • There are suitable, hygienic changing facilities for changing any children who are in nappies. The need for privacy during nappy changing and toileting will be balanced against any safeguarding considerations.
- • Staffing arrangements will meet the needs of all of our children to ensure their safety. We will ensure that children will be adequately supervised, including whilst eating, and will decide how to deploy our staff to ensure the children's needs are met. Children will be within the sight and hearing of supervising staff and will always be within the sight and hearing of staff whilst eating. At least one person who has a current paediatric first aid (PFA) certificate must be on the premises and available at all times that children are present and will accompany children on outings or visits away from the school site. PFA certificates will be renewed every 3 years.
  [Delete the following as appropriate to the setting]

For children under 2:
There must be at least one member of staff for every three children; at least one member of staff will hold an approved level 3 qualification and will be suitably experienced in working with children under 2; at least half of all other staff will hold an approved level 2 qualification; at least half of all staff must have received training that specifically addresses the care of babies and where there is a room for under two-year-olds, the member of staff in charge must have suitable experience of working with under twos.

For children aged 2:
There must be at least one member of staff for every five children; at least one member of staff will have an approved level 3 qualification and at least half of all other staff will hold an approved level 2 qualification.

For children aged 3 and over in maintained nursery schools and nursery classes in maintained schools:
There must be at least one member of staff for every 13 children; at least one member of staff must be a school teacher as defined by section 122 of the Education Act 2002 and at least one other member of staff must hold an approved level 3 qualification.

Reception classes:
Reception classes in maintained schools and academies are subject to infant class size legislation, which is limited to 30 pupils per school teacher (subject to permitted exceptions) while an ordinary teaching session is conducted. 'School teachers' do not include teaching assistants, higher level teaching assistants, or other support staff. Consequently, in an ordinary teaching session, we will ensure that we employ sufficient school teachers to enable us to teach our infant classes in groups of no more than 30 per school teacher.

31. Children who are LGBTQ+ and/or questioning their gender

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 has introduced specific guidance regarding supporting children that are questioning their gender that schools must adhere to, therefore school should set out how they address the specific issues raised in relation to single sex spaces (toilets, changing rooms, boarding / residential accommodation), single-sex sports activities, social transition (including parental involvement), etc.

Schools should add detail to this section that relates specifically to their own individual school setting. Each school will be unique (age, stage, religious denomination, single sex, etc.) Therefore their response will be different. This may include detailing the school response and measures implemented, linking other relevant policies / documents and what the curriculum offer looks like, etc.

Our school recognises that we have a statutory responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of all pupils and a legal duty to act in their best interests. Alongside this, there are additional legal responsibilities to take into consideration when it comes to young people with protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010.

A child that is lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans or questioning is not in itself an inherent risk factor for harm, however they can sometimes be targeted by other children. In some cases, a child who is perceived by other children to be lesbian, gay, or bisexual (whether they are or not) can be just as vulnerable as children who are. Our school recognises this and will identify and address vulnerabilities, for example, the risk of bullying and will take steps to prevent them, which includes using appropriate sanctions in line with our behaviour policy alongside an effective PSHE curriculum offer and building a safe, open and tolerant community.

Risks can be compounded where children lack trusted adults with whom they can be open. It is therefore essential that all staff endeavour to reduce any additional barriers faced and create a culture where children can speak out or share their concerns with members of staff.

Add here the school specific information.

32. Monitoring and Quality Assurance

Policies and procedures only remain effective if they are regularly monitored and reviewed to ensure that they are still applicable and relevant. Our school and its governors recognise the importance of monitoring and quality assuring the effectiveness of our child protection policy and the procedures set out within it. The aim of monitoring and evaluating the child protection policy is to learn from practical experience, which will contribute to inform policy reviews and future changes to the policy and procedures. The process of monitoring and quality assurance will help the school and governors to identify the policy strengths and weaknesses and will help to provide an understanding of the reasons for these, so that decisions can be made to resolve any limitations with immediate effect.

Monitoring and evaluation will be done by checking whether the standards from the child protection policy are implemented and whether safeguards are working and will be undertaken throughout the year by the Designated Safeguarding Lead, the Headteacher and the Chair of Governors. Activities which could form part of the ongoing monitoring of effectiveness are:

School should include here examples of their own monitoring of effectiveness.

- Scrutiny of the Single Central Record and personnel files to ensure pre-employment checks are robust and up-to-date, and that job descriptions for new positions include reference to child protection, etc.
- Scrutiny of the school's annual 175 safeguarding audit by the Chair of Governors and Link Governor for Safeguarding, alongside the full governing body having oversight of any actions arising from the audit.
- Confirmation that training has been undertaken according to planned schedule and that all relevant staff and volunteers have participated
- There is effective analysis of safeguarding data including bullying, attendance, exclusions, behaviour logs, pupils taken off roll, the views and progress and participation of vulnerable students.

In particular, the school will monitor the link between attendance and safeguarding and those persistently absent, frequently late, missing school (including part of the school day) or those who suddenly stop attending.

- Methods such as regular 'safeguarding training questionnaires' used to evidence the effectiveness of staff training and their understanding of Part 1 of Keeping Children Safe in Education.
- Regular meetings with staff, volunteers and children which include the opportunity to discuss safeguarding and child protection, or use of questionnaires to evidence this
- Safeguarding learning walks designed to evidence and test out key safeguarding standards
- Adapting and amending the policy and procedures outside of their annual review date to reflect current issues which may have recently arisen in order to ensure that all children are protected at all times.

Our school will also draw upon additional quality assurance activities and templates referenced within the SIL Schools Safeguarding Handbook e.g. Single Central Record Checklist, Personnel Record Checklist and the Headteacher's Quality Assurance Checklist.

Model Safer Working Practices Code of Conduct for Adults

If schools choose to draw upon the model safer working practices code of conduct framework below, they should personalise it for their own setting, considering the age and needs of their children and the types of activities undertaken. For example, early years settings will need to reference their policy for the use of mobile phones and any other electronic devices with imaging and sharing capabilities as these must be locked away in the early year's provision, and some settings will require staff to have a greater level of physical contact or intimate personal care therefore this should be reflected within their code of conduct.

Introduction:

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 sets out the requirement for all schools to have a staff code of conduct, sometimes referred to as a staff behaviour policy. This code of conduct should be followed by all staff (including visiting staff), volunteers and governors. It should be read alongside our Child Protection policy, Managing Allegations policy and our Online safety and Acceptable Use policies.

Our school is committed to safeguarding children and promoting children's welfare and expects all staff, governors, volunteers and visitors to share this commitment and maintain a vigilant and safe environment. It is our willingness to work in a safe manner and challenge inappropriate behaviour that underpins this commitment.

Everyone is expected to adhere to this "Code of Conduct" along with the Safer Recruitment Consortium Guidance for safer working practice for those working with children and young people in education settings 2022.

Everyone must also read and understand Part One and Annex A of Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026. This code of conduct aims to support adults so they don't work in a manner which might lead to an allegation against them by raising awareness of illegal, unsafe, unprofessional and unwise behaviour and by supporting staff and volunteers to understand what safe, professional conduct is. Equally it aims to reduce the opportunity for any adult intent on grooming or harming a young person. The policy aims to reduce the risk of incidents or misunderstandings occurring by developing and setting out clear guidelines and boundaries. It encourages you to work in an open and transparent way that should avoid someone questioning your motives, intentions or suitability to work with young people.

Our school promotes an open and transparent culture in which all concerns about adults working in or on behalf of the school are dealt with promptly and appropriately. Creating this culture in which all concerns are shared responsibly, in a timely way with the right person, and are recorded and dealt with appropriately is critical to effective safeguarding practice. This culture enables the school to identify concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour at the earliest possible stage, minimises the risk of abuse and ensures that all adults working in or on behalf of the school are clear about professional boundaries and act within these, in accordance with our ethos and values. This culture also empowers individuals to share concerns with key staff about their own behaviour at the earliest possible opportunity.

As part of our safeguarding induction all new staff and volunteers will receive a copy of this code of conduct alongside a copy of the **Safer Recruitment Consortium** document "Guidance for safer working practice for those working with children and young people in education settings". These documents will be reissued and revisited as part of on-going training to support staff and volunteers with their understanding of key expectations.

This will ensure that staff and volunteers are provided with opportunities to consider the implications of both documents within our school, within their own role and enable them seek clarification, should it be required.

It is a key principle of this code of conduct that **everyone** understands their responsibility to share **without** delay any concerns they may have about a child's welfare or an adult's behaviour towards a young person. This includes any behaviours which may not meet the harm threshold and may be deemed to be a 'low-level concern' as set out in our child protection policy. In addition, **everyone** has a responsibility to escalate their concerns to the Local Authority Designated Officer if they feel that safeguarding concerns they have raised about a child or adult working at the school are not being addressed by the school. Further information and guidance regarding how school will respond to concerns about an adult's conduct towards children where the harm threshold is met are set out in our managing allegations policy.

Code of Conduct:

Our school will create a culture of openness, transparency, trust and support where all members of the school community feel empowered to share relevant information about themselves or someone else.

- Staff are responsible for their own actions and behaviour and should avoid any conduct which would lead any reasonable person to question their motivation and intentions.
- If you have any concerns that a child is being harmed, abused or neglected you **must share your concerns immediately** both verbally and in writing with the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead, Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead or another member of the school's Leadership Team. Always listen carefully to the child and report what they tell you in the child's own words. Never promise to keep a secret.
- If you receive an allegation against an adult working in the school or observe behaviour that concerns you, you must discuss your concerns **without delay** with the Headteacher. In the absence of the Headteacher, concerns should be shared with another senior member of staff such as the Deputy Headteacher or Designated Safeguarding Lead, or the Chair of Governors. Concerns regarding the Headteacher should be directed to the Chair of Governors or Local Authority Designated Officer. The school's Whistleblowing Policy and the NSPCC whistleblowing helpline are available for staff who do not feel able to raise concerns internally. Staff can call the NSPCC on 0800 028 0285 – the line is available from 8:00am to 8:00pm, Monday to Friday and 9am – 6pm at the weekend or email: **help@NSPCC.org.uk**. **Safeguarding-Mate** can also guide staff should they have a concern about an adult's behaviour.
- If you are worried that the behaviour of an adult working in the school (including all third party staff, supply staff and volunteers) is giving cause for concern, no matter how small the concern is and even if it does not meet the harm threshold, you must share your concerns with the designated safeguarding lead without delay. This is in line with the low-level concern procedures set out within our child protection policy. Concerns regarding the designated safeguarding lead should be directed to the headteacher.
- Anyone (in emergencies or if they are required to) can make a referral about their concerns for a child directly to Children's Services.

You should:

- Follow the school's child protection policy and procedures and in line with this share safeguarding information appropriately but also act accordingly with sensitive and confidential information.
- Read, understand and adhere to the Safer Recruitment Consortium document "**Guidance for safer working practice for those working with children and young people in education settings**" alongside this policy.
- Be alert to the indicators of harm and abuse towards a child, including child-on-child abuse.
- Dress appropriately according to your role, ensuring that clothing is compliant with professional standards and is not likely to be viewed as offensive or revealing and that it is absent of any political or other contentious slogans or images. This applies to online or virtual teaching, as well as face to face.

- Act as an appropriate role model, treating all members of the school community with respect and tolerance.
- Always maintain appropriate professional boundaries and avoid behaviour which could be misinterpreted by others. This includes within school, in your personal life and in any online activity. All staff have a responsibility to model safe practice at all times.
- Ensure that you appropriately challenge any form of derogatory and sexualised language or behaviour to ensure that everyone is respectful at all times.
- Ensure gifts given or received are recorded and discussed with your Line Manager.
- Respect others' confidentiality unless sharing information is appropriate to ensuring their welfare.
- Ensure that when working one to one with a child, it is only undertaken when absolutely necessary (both in person and online), in line with guidance given by the school and is with the prior knowledge and approval of senior leaders and parents/carers.
- Adhere to the school's policies, particularly those related to safeguarding - including child protection, behaviour, attendance, physical intervention, intimate care, anti-bullying, equal opportunities, data protection, health and safety and online safety (acceptable use policy).
- Ensure that you understand your responsibilities under the UK General Data Protection Regulation and Data Protection Act 2018 and be clear that where personal information is recorded electronically, systems and devices are kept secure.
- Ensure you are familiar with the DfE Data Protection guidance for schools, which will help school staff, governors and trustees understand how to comply with data protection law, develop their data policies and processes, know what staff and pupil data to keep and follow good practices for preventing personal data breaches.
- Report any behaviour or situations which you feel may give rise to a complaint or misunderstanding in respect of your own actions both in and out of school.
- Share situations with the designated safeguarding lead if you feel your actions might have sat outside this code of conduct or may appear to others that they have done so.
- Share with the Headteacher (or Designated Safeguarding Lead in their absence) any behaviour of another adult working in or on behalf of the school where it gives you cause for concern or breaches this code of conduct or the school's safeguarding policies in line with the low-level concern procedures set out in our child protection policy. Examples of such behaviours include, but are not limited to, being over friendly with children, having favourites, taking photographs of children on their mobile phone or engaging with a child on a one to one basis in a secluded area or behind a closed door. Your intervention may allow for their practice to be supported and developed and/or prevent a child from being harmed.
- Understand that it may be appropriate to discuss with the Headteacher matters outside of work, including online, which may have implications for the safeguarding of children in the workplace. This includes information about yourself or other adults working in or on behalf of the school. You must ensure that you are aware of the circumstances where this would be applicable.
- Be aware that behaviour by yourself, those with whom you have a relationship or association, or others in your personal life (in or out of school or online), may impact on your work with children.
- Staff are encouraged to declare any relationships which exist outside of the workplace with any children, families or staff. This is in line with our school culture and enables any implications for practice to be considered and staff to be provided with appropriate advice to support safer working practices.
- Understand the circumstances where it may be necessary to 'self-report' incidents where they could have found themselves in a situation which could be misinterpreted, or may appear compromising to others, or if they have behaved in a manner which, on reflection, they consider to fall below the standards set out within the code of conduct for staff.
- Inform the head teacher of any cautions, convictions or relevant orders accrued during your employment, and/or if you are charged with a criminal offence.
- Understand that if you commit a relevant offence that would appear on your DBS certificate or you become disqualified under the Childcare Act 2006 (those staff covered by the scope of the guidance): **www.gov.uk/government/publications/disqualification-under-the-childcare-act-2006** then you must inform your headteacher. (The Childcare Act 2006 does not cover all settings or even all staff within a setting.)

School to add any additional points they feel pertinent to their setting, paying particular reference to the school's manual handling and intimate care policies, and low-level concern procedures or policy.

Never:

- Act in a way both at work and/or in your personal life (including online) that brings yourself, school or the teaching profession into disrepute.
- Make, encourage or ignore others, making personal comments which scapegoat, demean or humiliate any member of the school community including ignoring any form of child-on-child abuse.
- Use your position to intimidate, bully, humiliate, coerce or undermine any member of the school community. This includes shouting in anger and aggressively to punish them rather than raising your voice to be heard or avoid danger.
- Undermine fundamental British values including democracy, rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect, and tolerance for those with different faiths, beliefs or from different cultures.
- Develop 'personal' or sexual relationships with children and young people, including making sexual remarks or having inappropriate sexual banter. In addition, the Sexual Offences Act 2003 makes it clear that all members of staff are in a position of trust and would therefore be committing a criminal offence to have a sexual relationship with a young person in full time education/below the age of 18, even if that pupil is over the age of consent.
- Engage in inappropriate conversations with students or share inappropriate personal information about yourself or others.
- Discriminate favourably or unfavourably towards a child.
- Give personal contact details to pupils or communicate outside of school using social networks, email, text, WhatsApp, etc. or meet a young person out of school unless part of a planned school activity with the prior knowledge and agreement of your Line Manager.
- Have conversations online or via social networking sites that make reference to children, parents or other colleagues at the school or be derogatory about the school. Never make any statements or post images online or on social networking sites that might cause someone to question your suitability to act as a role model to young people or bring your own or the school's reputation into disrepute. You should never communicate with parents through social network sites and you are strongly advised to declare any existing friendships/relationships to your Line Manager.
- Use personal equipment to photograph children (always use the school's equipment) and ensure any photographs are only stored in the designated secure place on the school's network and not on portable equipment.
- Post on the school's website or social media accounts any photographs of children without their consent. (Some children may be put at risk by their whereabouts being made public)
- Use your personal mobile phone (or other personal IT equipment including 'wearable' technology) in areas used by children unless in emergencies or under an agreed protocol set out by the headteacher. **In early years settings mobile phones should be locked away rather than carried by staff in areas occupied by children and other electronic devices with image sharing capabilities should be treated in the same manner as mobile phones.**
- Undertake 'one to one' activities out of the sight of others unless it is a planned activity with the prior knowledge of your Line Manager and in keeping with your own responsibilities. You should not cover windows or door panels but always act in an open and transparent way.
- Transport children unsafely, for example by driving whilst using your mobile phone, consuming alcohol, failing to ensure that seat belts are worn or driving without appropriate insurance. Any trips should be planned and with the prior knowledge of your Line Manager. Unforeseen events should be reported to your Line Manager. It is good practice to have another adult to act as an escort during the journey
- Consume or be under the influence of alcohol or any substance, including the misuse of prescribed medication, when professionally active and responsible for either pupils, parents, other colleagues and/or school property

- Have physical contact with young people that might be misconstrued or considered indecent or harmful. Ensure you are always able to give an account of the reasons for physical contact or physical intervention. Where physical contact is required it is good practice for it to be within the sight of others. Any physical contact with a child that was needed to control or restrain a child should always be the minimum required. **Schools should insert guidance here relating specifically to their own setting as some schools will require greater levels of physical contact or intimate care with the children.**
- **School to add any additional points they feel are pertinent to their setting or age / needs of their children.**

All school employees must have a clear understanding of their responsibilities under this code of conduct. It aims to help avoid poor working practices that may lead to a person's behaviour being investigated and the consideration of disciplinary procedures.

Model Managing Allegations Against Staff and Volunteers Policy and Procedures

This policy should be read alongside the DfE guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education and the Local Safeguarding Children Partnership's policy and procedures.

The headteacher is the designated case manager for allegations against all staff and volunteers. A nominated governor (chair of governors) is the case manager for managing allegations against the headteacher.

The Local Authority Designated Officers in Liverpool are Pauline Trubshaw and Catherine Ballans. They can be contacted via email LADO@liverpool.gov.uk. Referrals should be made by emailing the LADO referral form to **LADO@liverpool.gov.uk**.

Schools from outside of the Liverpool Local Authority should enter the relevant Local Authority Designated Officer details in the box above. Details can be found in the key contacts pages within the Schools Safeguarding Handbook or via your local Safeguarding Children Partnership website.

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance to all staff and volunteers in relation to the processes for managing allegations against adults working with children.

Our school promotes an open and transparent culture in which all concerns about adults working in or on behalf of the school are dealt with promptly and appropriately. Creating this culture in which all concerns are shared responsibly, in a timely way with the right person, and are recorded and dealt with appropriately is critical to effective safeguarding practice. This culture enables the school to identify concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour at the earliest possible stage, minimises the risk of abuse and ensures that all adults working in or on behalf of the school are clear about professional boundaries and act within these, in accordance with our ethos and values. This culture also empowers individuals to share concerns with key staff about their own behaviour at the earliest possible opportunity.

Key principles:

- This policy is applicable to any adult working in the school, including supply staff, trainee teachers, volunteers and any contracted staff.
- Any concerns about an adult's behaviour towards a child or concerns about someone's suitability to work with children, or behaviours that are inconsistent with the school's code of conduct and **Guidance for safer working practices for working with children** must be reported without delay in order to protect children. The school will not delay in seeking advice from the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) or making a referral to Children's Services or contacting the police. The school should report any potential criminal actions to the police.
- The school will work in partnership with other agencies to ensure any allegation is resolved in a timely way.

The school is aware of its statutory responsibility to make a referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service and/or the Teaching Regulation Agency when the outcome of a case requires this.

- In keeping with the DfE guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education any reference, including an agreed reference as part of a settlement agreement, will always include any substantiated allegations, safeguarding concerns and a statement about someone's suitability to work with young people.
- The person should be given full opportunity to respond to the allegation and to participate in any investigation. The DfE is clear that compromise agreements where the person resigns and leaves with an agreed reference and the employer agrees not to pursue disciplinary action must not be used in cases of refusal to co-operate or resignation before the person's notice period expires. Such an agreement will not prevent a thorough police investigation where that is appropriate.

The school also has to investigate the matter in order to provide information to support any referral to the DBS or Teaching Regulation Agency.

- Consideration will be given as to how best to support all parties.
- Careful consideration will be given to alternatives to suspending the member of staff.
- The school is aware of its responsibility to maintain confidentiality and abide by the Education Act 2011 which places reporting restrictions preventing the publication of any material that might lead to the identification of a teacher until the person is charged or reporting restrictions are lifted. The school should make parents aware of their responsibilities in respect of confidentiality. Once the matter is concluded, careful consideration will be given to any lessons that can be learnt in particular induction, ongoing training, supervision, policies and procedures.
- If an adult who works with children has involvement from Children's Social Care in respect of their own child, or a child that they live with or have contact with, it is the responsibility of Children's Social Care to assess the immediate concern and inform the LADO of whether the adult poses a risk to children. Examples of this may include:
  - Allegations of assault, physical or emotional, on their own child or on a child they live with or have contact with;
  - Domestic abuse;
  - Substance misuse; or
  - Lives with or is in a relationship with a person who is identified as a risk to children
- Staff will be aware that behaviour by themselves, those with whom they have a relationship or association, or others in their personal lives (in or out of school or online), may impact on their work with children.
- Staff will be aware that they should inform the head teacher of any cautions, convictions or relevant order accrued during their employment, and/or if they are charged with a criminal offence.
- Staff will report any behaviour or situations which they feel may give rise to a complaint or misunderstanding in respect of their own actions both in and out of school. They will also share situations with the designated safeguarding lead where they believe their actions may have sat outside the agreed code of conduct for staff, or may appear to others that they have done so. The designated safeguarding lead will inform the Headteacher as soon as possible to enable a decision about the next course of action. **[School to amend this bullet point if staff are expected to make a report directly to the Headteacher, as opposed to reporting to the designated safeguarding lead]**
- Staff will be aware that if the behaviour of an adult working in the school is giving cause for concern, no matter how small the concern is and even if it does not meet the harm threshold set out in this policy, they must share their concerns with the headteacher without delay. This is in line with the low-level concern procedures set out within our child protection policy. Concerns regarding the headteacher should be directed to the Chair of Governors.
- Staff will be aware that if their role is within the scope of the Childcare Act 2006 and they commit a relevant offence that would appear on their DBS certificate or they become disqualified under the Childcare Act 2006, then they must inform their head teacher. **[Delete bullet point if not applicable]**
- In line with our code of conduct and child protection policy, staff in school should ensure that they disclose information about themselves, or others, relating to the above to the Head teacher as soon as possible. School will create an environment and culture where staff are supported and empowered to do this.
- If the school receives an allegation relating to an incident that happened when an individual or organisation was using their school premises for the purpose of running activities for children (for example community groups, sports associations, or service providers that run extra-curricular activities), the school will follow its own policies and procedures, including informing the LADO.

Key procedures:

- The school should follow the guidance set out in part 4 of Keeping Children Safe in Education and the local safeguarding children partnership's procedures.
- Any concerns about the behaviour of any adult working for the school towards a child should be brought to the attention of the Head Teacher and/or Designated Safeguarding Lead without delay. This includes supply staff and volunteers. Concerns about the headteacher should be directed to the nominated governor (chair of governors). The school's Whistleblowing Policy and the NSPCC whistleblowing helpline are available for staff who do not feel able to raise concerns internally. Staff can call the NSPCC on 0800 028 0285 – the line is available from 8:00am to 8:00pm, Monday to Friday or email: **help@nspcc.org.uk**. **Safeguarding-Mate** can also guide staff should they have a concern about an adult's behaviour.
- Initial considerations should consider if the person may have:
  - behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child and/or;
  - possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child and/or;
  - behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates he or she would pose a risk of harm to children; and/or
  - behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children
- Equally initial consideration and 'fact finding' may determine the concerns do not meet the above criteria and do not warrant a police investigation or enquiries by Children's Services. There may be clear evidence from the outset the allegation is false, malicious or unfounded.
- Consideration should be given to immediately protecting the child and the need to contact the police.
- The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) is the linchpin in the process and should be contacted without delay to discuss allegations against staff and volunteers. The LADO will hold a strategy discussion with police and relevant agencies. The strategy discussion and subsequent strategy meetings will consider:
  - the case for suspension or alternatives to suspension
  - any investigation undertaken by police
  - any assessment being undertaken by Children's Services
  - the basis for when the employer can begin a disciplinary investigation
  - managing, sharing information and confidentially issues
  - wellbeing and support needed for all parties
- All referrals to the LADO should be made using the LADO referral form.
- The Case Manager should seek advice from their HR Provider and the SIL Safeguarding Team (**safeguarding@sil-ltd.co.uk**)
- When an allegation arises in an Early Years setting the Early Years Foundation Stage Framework may require the allegation to be reported to Ofsted (normally within 14 days). **[Delete bullet point if not applicable]**
- The LADO will advise if the parents and member of staff can be informed of the allegation and exactly what information can be shared.
- At the point at which the member of staff is notified of the allegation they should be given information about the Managing Allegations Against Adults and Volunteers procedures and also a nominated member of staff to support them. They should be advised to seek Trade Union support and consideration should be given to their wellbeing and continued support. They should be given guidance about the process.
- The LADO will advise how to manage speculation, leaks and gossip and whether it would be prudent to contact the Local Authority Press Office, and any information which might be reasonably given to the community to reduce speculation. In line with Keeping Children Safe in Education, staff and the child's family will be advised about the legislation on imposing restrictions which makes clear that the 'publication' of material that may lead to the identification of the teacher who is the subject of the allegation is prohibited.

The school will only begin a disciplinary investigation when advised by the LADO and police that these processes can begin.

- Suspension is always a neutral act and should not be an automatic response. The decision to suspend a member of staff is the employer's only. However, the school will need to draw upon the advice of the LADO and Police and, in keeping with the DfE guidance, record the reasons why suspension was chosen over other alternatives.
- The case manager (Head Teacher or nominated governor) will record all actions, discussions and decisions taken in respect of the allegation. They will need to attend strategy meetings chaired by the LADO. They may wish to be accompanied by their HR Provider.
- The DfE sets out the following definitions which should be used when determining the outcome of allegation investigations:
  - **Substantiated:** there is sufficient evidence to prove the allegation;
  - **False:** there is sufficient evidence to disprove the allegation;
  - **Unsubstantiated:** there is insufficient evidence to either prove or disprove the allegation. The term, therefore, does not imply guilt or innocence;
  - **Malicious:** there is sufficient evidence to disprove the allegation and there has been a deliberate act to deceive;
  - **Unfounded:** Schools may wish to use the additional definition of 'unfounded' to reflect cases where there is no evidence or proper basis which supports the allegation being made. It might also indicate that the person making the allegation misinterpreted the incident or was mistaken about what they saw. Alternatively, they may not have been aware of all the circumstances.
- The school will only include in references substantiated allegations.
- The school will retain information about substantiated, false, unfounded and unsubstantiated allegations on personnel files.
- The record of the allegation will be retained until the member of staff's normal retirement age or for a period of ten years from the date of the allegation if that is longer.
- The school will consider what support the member of staff, child and family need throughout the process. In cases of malicious allegations, the school will consider whether disciplinary action is appropriate against the child or a referral to the police or Children's Services is required.
- On conclusion of the case the member of staff will be given a copy of the outcome of the investigation and, where required, supported to return to work. The school has a legal duty to refer to the DBS in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education. The school will not enter into compromise/settlement agreements if a member of staff faces an allegation against them and the agreement prevents sharing concerns about someone's suitability to work with children and/or the member of staff refuses to cooperate with the investigation (refer to detail of DfE guidance). The school would also still need to conclude its investigation and when required refer to the DBS for consideration of 'barring from working with children'.
- The school has a responsibility to refer to the Secretary of State (Teaching Regulation Agency) any teacher because of serious misconduct in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education.
- Consideration should also be given to how practices or procedures should be reviewed to help prevent similar events in the future, including the decision to suspend and the length of suspension.
- In some circumstances, the school will have to consider an allegation against an individual who is not directly employed by the organisation and where our disciplinary procedures do not fully apply (for example supply teachers). Whilst the school is not the employer of the individual, we still have responsibility to ensure allegations are dealt with properly and will liaise where appropriate with relevant parties. This will include co-operating with any enquiries from the LADO, police and/or local authority children's social care, and will usually result in the school taking the lead in any referrals or investigations due to other agencies not having direct access to the children or staff within the school. The school will not cease to use the services of a supply teacher as a result of safeguarding concerns, without finding out the facts and liaising with the LADO to determine a suitable outcome.
- The school may also receive an allegation concerning an incident that occurred when an individual or organisation was using / hiring the school premises for the purposes of running activities for children. As with any safeguarding allegation, the school will follow this policy and will refer to the LADO where required.

Summary Managing Allegations Against Staff and Volunteers Procedures

If a member of staff or volunteer has a concern about the behaviour of another adult working in the setting, then they should share this concern **without delay** with either:

- The Head teacher (**Case Manager** for allegations against staff). If the Head teacher is unavailable: Deputy Head teacher or Designated Safeguarding Lead.
- The Nominated Governor (The Chair of Governors is often the nominated **Case Manager** for allegations against the Head teacher)

Rarely a member of staff may need to contact Children's Services or the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) directly, or whistle-blow (NSPCC helpline 0800 028 0285 help@nspcc.org.uk)

The Case Manager will then consider the alleged behaviour drawing upon Local Safeguarding Children Partnership Procedures and the DfE Guidance '**Keeping Children Safe in Education**'. Did they:

- Act in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child and/or;
- Possibly commit a criminal offence against or related to a child and/or;
- Behave towards a child or children in a way that indicates he or she would pose a risk of harm to children; and/or
- Behave or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children

Consideration should always be given to the need to immediately protect a child or children and contacting Children's Services and/or Police **without delay**.

Children's Services should be contacted **without delay** to make a referral that will be forwarded to the Local Authority Designated Officer (A LADO referral form should be completed). Contact your HR Advisor.

The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) can be contacted by the Case Manager for guidance. You can also discuss your concerns with HR Advisor or the SIL Safeguarding Team.

A referral to Children's Services is **not** required but consideration should be given to a disciplinary investigation and following the school's low-level concern procedures. Contact your HR Advisor.

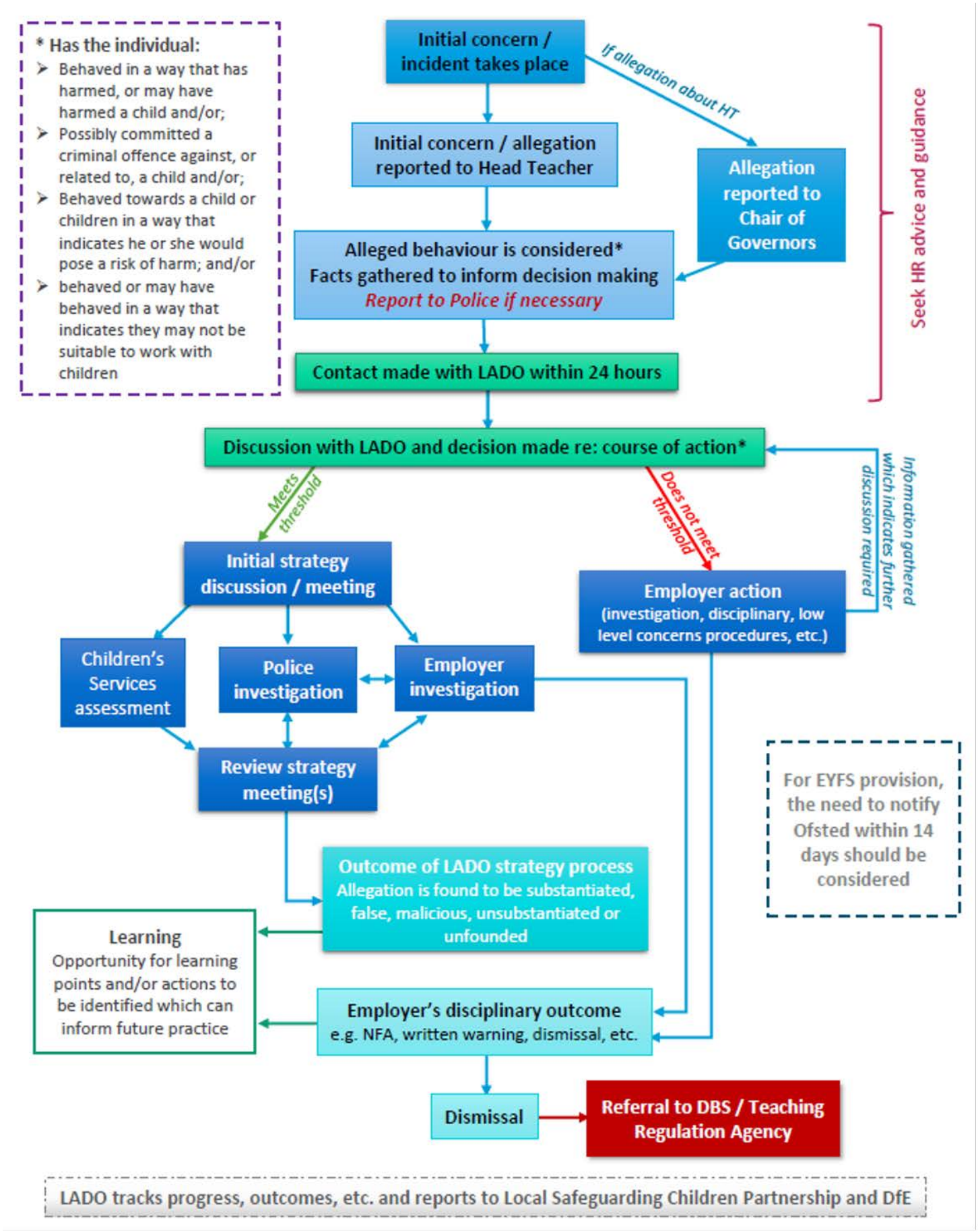
The LADO will have a strategy discussion with police (and other agencies). This may lead to a strategy meeting chaired by the LADO typically involving the case manager (and HR representative), Police and a Social Worker. The strategy discussion or strategy meeting will include a discussion about:

- The case for suspension or alternatives to suspension
- Any investigation undertaken by police
- Any assessment being undertaken by Children's Services
- The basis for when the employer can begin a disciplinary investigation
- Managing, sharing information and confidentially issues
- Wellbeing and support needed for all parties

Consideration given to:

- Supporting all parties
- Record keeping
- Outcome letter to member of staff
- Referral to DBS
- Referral to TRA
- Learning lessons to improve practice
- Feedback to the complainant (data protection consideration)

LADO / Managing Allegations Process



A Guide for a Member of School Staff Subject to an Allegation That Has Been Referred to the Local Authority Designated Officer

Any allegation is likely to cause anxiety and concern. This brief guide is to provide you with information if you are subject to an allegation. You can request a copy of the school's Managing Allegations Against Staff procedures and you can also refer to part 4 of the DFE guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education. In addition, you can seek advice from your own union and refer to the Local Safeguarding Children Partnership procedures.

What happens when an allegation is made?
The case manager in school (headteacher) will consider whether the allegation needs to be referred to the police and/or children's services because you may have:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed a child or may have harmed a child and/or;
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child and/or;
- Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates you would pose a risk of harm to children; and/or
- Behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children

If from the outset there is evidence to suggest the allegation is unfounded, false or malicious then the headteacher will inform you that no further action will be taken and they will provide support to you. If the above criteria have not been met the school may still need to consider whether your actions or behaviour warrant further disciplinary consideration.

However, when the above criteria have been met the headteacher will need to refer the allegation to the Local Authority Designated Officer for consideration by children's services and police. A strategy discussion and/or meeting will then take place to determine when you can be told about the allegation and what information you can be given. The strategy meeting will also consider any other children with whom you have significant contact, including your own children. It will also consider whether you need to be suspended from working with children. The decision to suspend you is your employer's decision but they will need to take account of police and children's services views. Alternatives to suspension should always be considered, drawing upon DFE guidance. If you are suspended, in line with your school's disciplinary policy, you will be invited to a meeting to set out the suspension. However, the police and children's services may have advised your school that they are unable to tell you the details of the allegation at this meeting.

Although you will not be able to discuss the allegation with members of the school community, a nominated member of staff will be appointed to liaise with you. They will keep you informed as to the progress of your case. You may be offered counselling services and/or support from occupational health. You should always contact your GP if you feel your health is being affected. You will be advised about the responsibilities of all parties in respect of confidentiality. You should seek advice from your union or professional body from the outset.

If police and children's services decide to take no further action your school may still need to undertake a disciplinary investigation, and/or follow the low-level concerns procedures set out in your school's child protection policy.

Your school are not able to agree to any reference that does not include any substantiated allegations or comment on your suitability to work with children or any safeguarding concerns. The school will always need to conclude its investigation and even if you choose to resign you will be invited to participate in the investigation. The DFE statutory guidance makes it clear the circumstances in which the school will not be able to enter into settlement/compromise agreement.

Your school may have a statutory responsibility to make a referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service and/or Teaching Regulation Agency.

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This resource is only for use by settings with a safeguarding SLA and should not be placed online or shared without the express permission of SIL.

Schools' Safeguarding Handbook

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