

How to safeguard children in education

Who is responsible?

All staff should be aware of systems within their school or college which support safeguarding.

Every school or college has a person who is the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL). You need to know who that is in your organisation, or who their deputies are.

This is the person that staff should report any concerns to.

The DSL has an important role in making decisions, reporting issues to other agencies, sharing information, coordinating and attending meetings.

All staff should receive appropriate safeguarding and child protection training, which is regularly updated.

In addition, all staff should receive safeguarding and child protection updates as required, and at least annually.

This could be via email, e-bulletins and staff meetings.

This is to provide them with relevant skills and knowledge to safeguard children effectively.

All staff should be aware of their local early help process and understand their role in it.

All staff should be aware of the process for making referrals to children's social care and for statutory assessments under the Children Act 1989, especially for children in need and if a child is suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm.

Early help, referrals and where to find out more information:

Early help means providing support as soon as a problem emerges at any point in a child's life. Where a child would benefit from coordinated early help, an early help inter-agency assessment should be arranged. Chapter one of [Working Together to Safeguard Children](#) provides detailed guidance on the early help process.

Referrals should follow the process set out in the local threshold document and local protocol for assessment.

Under the Children Act 1989, local authorities are required to provide services for children in need for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting their welfare.

Where a local authority has reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm, they may assess them. Local authorities have a duty to make enquiries to decide whether to take action to safeguard or promote the child's welfare.

Where staff have concerns about a child, they need to take immediate action. Follow your organisation's child protection policy and speak to the DSL.

They then have three options:

- If a referral is not required, the school or college takes relevant action. This could possibly include pastoral support, early help and monitoring of the situation.
- If the concerns and situation escalate, a referral is made.
- The DSL or other staff make a referral to children's social care and call the police if appropriate. Here, within 1 working day, a social worker makes a decision about the type of response that is required.

The DSL or a deputy should always be available to discuss safeguarding concerns. If they are not available, staff should consider speaking to a member of the senior leadership team or take advice from local children's social care. Any action taken should be shared with the DSL or deputy as soon as is practically possible. You can find out more about information sharing in this [advice for practitioners](#).

The five R's

Receive the information	and listen actively, use open body language, accept information, do not judge. Recognise that the child trusts you.
Reassure	the child that you hear what they are saying. Do not promise what cannot be delivered, such as keeping the information a secret.
Respond	and tell them what you are going to do and do it. Ensure the child is ok and understands before leaving.
Report	as soon as possible to the DSL. Always put reporting before confidentiality.
Record	facts only, no opinions. When? Where? Who? What? How?

Confidentiality

All staff should know what to do if a child tells them that they are being abused or neglected.

Staff should know how to manage the requirement to maintain an appropriate level of confidentiality.

This means only involving those who need to be involved, such as the DSL, or a deputy, and children's social care.

Staff should never promise a child that they will not tell anyone about a report of abuse, as this may ultimately not be in the best interests of the child.

Raising concerns about a child always comes first.

The Data Protection Act 2018 and GDPR do not prevent or limit the sharing of information for the purposes of keeping children safe. Fears about sharing information must not be allowed to stand in the way of the need to promote the welfare and protect the safety of children.

Recording information

- Listen carefully to the child and do not judge. Do not ask leading or open questions and only prompt the child where necessary.
- Be clear about boundaries and how the report will be progressed.
- Consider the best way to make a record of the report. Best practice is to wait until the end of the report and immediately write up a thorough summary. This allows you to devote your full attention to the child. It may be appropriate to make notes though, especially if a second member of staff is present. If making notes, be conscious of the need to remain engaged with the child and to not be distracted.
- Having two members of staff listening to the child is preferable, especially with one of them being the DSL or a deputy. If this is not possible, inform the DSL or deputy about the report as soon as practically possible.
- Only record the facts as the child presents them. The notes should not reflect your personal opinion. Schools and colleges should be aware that notes of such reports could become part of a statutory assessment by children's social care, or part of a criminal investigation.
- Where the report includes an online element, you must be aware of the [Searching, screening and confiscation advice for schools](#) and [UKCCIS Sexting advice](#) for schools and colleges.
- The key consideration is to not view or forward illegal images of a child. The highlighted advice above provides more details on what to do when viewing an image is unavoidable.

Use common sense

- When concerned about the welfare of a child, act in the best interests of the child.
- Schools and colleges should follow general safeguarding principles.
- Immediate consideration should be given as to how the victim is best supported and protected from the alleged perpetrator. This may include other children who are involved or impacted.
- The starting point regarding any report should always be that abuse, bullying or harassment is not acceptable and will not be tolerated. Especially important is not to pass off any violence, bullying or harassment as 'banter', 'part of growing up' or 'having a laugh'.

Where to find more information

- The departmental advice [What to do if you're worried a child is being abused: advice for practitioners](#) provides more information on understanding and identifying abuse and neglect. Examples of potential indicators of abuse and neglect are highlighted throughout the advice and is particularly helpful for school and college staff.
- The [NSPCC website](#) provides useful additional information on abuse and neglect and what to look out for.