



Department
for Education

Keeping children safe in education: information for all school and college staff

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Summary

This information has been lifted from the main statutory guidance, *Keeping Children Safe in Education* which staff may also wish to read.

What school and college staff should know and do

1. Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is defined for the purposes of this guidance as: protecting children from maltreatment; preventing impairment of children's health or development; ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care; and taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.
2. Children includes everyone under the age of 18.
3. Where a child is suffering significant harm, or is likely to do so, action should be taken to protect that child.¹ Action should also 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.²

The role of the school or college

4. Everyone who comes into contact with children and their families has a role to play in safeguarding children. School and college staff are particularly important as they are in a position to identify concerns early and provide help for children, to prevent concerns from escalating. Schools and colleges and their staff form part of the wider safeguarding system for children. This system is described in statutory guidance *Working Together to Safeguard Children 2013*.³ Schools and colleges should work with social care, the police, health services and other services to promote the welfare of children and protect them from harm.
5. Each school and college should have a designated safeguarding lead who will provide support to staff members to carry out their safeguarding duties and who will liaise closely with other services such as children's social care.

¹ Such action might be taken under section 47 and section 44 of the Children Act 1989.

² Such action might be taken under section 17 of the Children Act 1989.

³ Department for Education guidance: [Working Together to Safeguard Children 2013](#)

The role of school and college staff

6. The *Teacher Standards 2012*⁴ state that teachers, including headteachers, should safeguard children's wellbeing and maintain public trust in the teaching profession as part of their professional duties.
7. All school and college staff have a responsibility to provide a safe environment in which children can learn.
8. All school and college staff have a responsibility to identify children who may be in need of extra help or who are suffering, or are likely to suffer, significant harm. All staff then have a responsibility to take appropriate action, working with other services as needed.
9. In addition to working with the designated safeguarding lead staff members should be aware that they may be asked to support social workers to take decisions about individual children.

What school and college staff need to know

10. All staff members should be aware of systems within their school or college which support safeguarding and these should be explained to them as part of staff induction. This includes: the school's or college's child protection policy; the school's or college's staff behaviour policy (sometimes called a code of conduct); and the designated safeguarding lead.
11. All staff members should also receive appropriate child protection training which is regularly updated.

What school and college staff should look out for

12. All school and college staff members should be aware of the signs of abuse and neglect so that they are able to identify cases of children who may be in need of help or protection.
13. Staff members working with children are advised to maintain an attitude of 'it could happen here' where safeguarding is concerned. When concerned about the welfare of a child, staff members should always act in the interests of the child.
14. There are various expert sources of advice on the signs of abuse and neglect. Each area's Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) should be able to advise on

⁴ The Teachers' Standards apply to: trainees working towards QTS; all teachers completing their statutory induction period (newly qualified teachers [NQTs]); and teachers in maintained schools, including maintained special schools, who are covered by the 2012 appraisal regulations.

useful material, including training options. One good source of advice is provided on the [NSPCC website](#). Types of abuse and neglect, and examples of specific safeguarding issues, are described in paragraphs 20-25.⁵

15. Knowing what to look for is vital to the early identification of abuse and neglect. If staff members are unsure they should always speak to children's social care.

16. A child going missing from an education setting is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect. School and college staff members should follow their procedures for dealing with children who go missing, particularly on repeat occasions. They should act to identify any risk of abuse and neglect, including sexual abuse or exploitation. More information can be found in this [guidance about children who run away or go missing from home or care](#)

What school and college staff should do if they have concerns about a child

17. If staff members have concerns about a child they should raise these with the school's or college's designated safeguarding lead. This also includes situations of abuse which may involve staff members. The safeguarding lead will usually decide whether to make a referral to children's social care, but it is important to note that any staff member can refer their concerns to children's social care directly.⁶ Where a child and family would benefit from co-ordinated support from more than one agency (for example education, health, housing, police) there should be an inter-agency assessment. These assessments should identify what help the child and family require to prevent needs escalating to a point where intervention would be needed via a statutory assessment under the Children Act 1989. The early help assessment should be undertaken by a lead professional who could be a teacher, special educational needs co-ordinator, General Practitioner (GP), family support worker, and/or health visitor.

18. If, at any point, there is a risk of immediate serious harm to a child a referral should be made to children's social care immediately. Anybody can make a referral. If the child's situation does not appear to be improving the staff member with concerns should press for re-consideration. Concerns should always lead to help for the child at some point.

19. It is important for children to receive the right help at the right time to address risks and prevent issues escalating. Research and Serious Case Reviews have repeatedly shown the dangers of failing to take effective action. Poor practice includes: failing to act on and refer the early signs of abuse and neglect, poor record keeping, failing to listen to the views of the child, failing to re-assess concerns when situations do

⁵ Department for Education (DfE) [training materials on neglect](#)

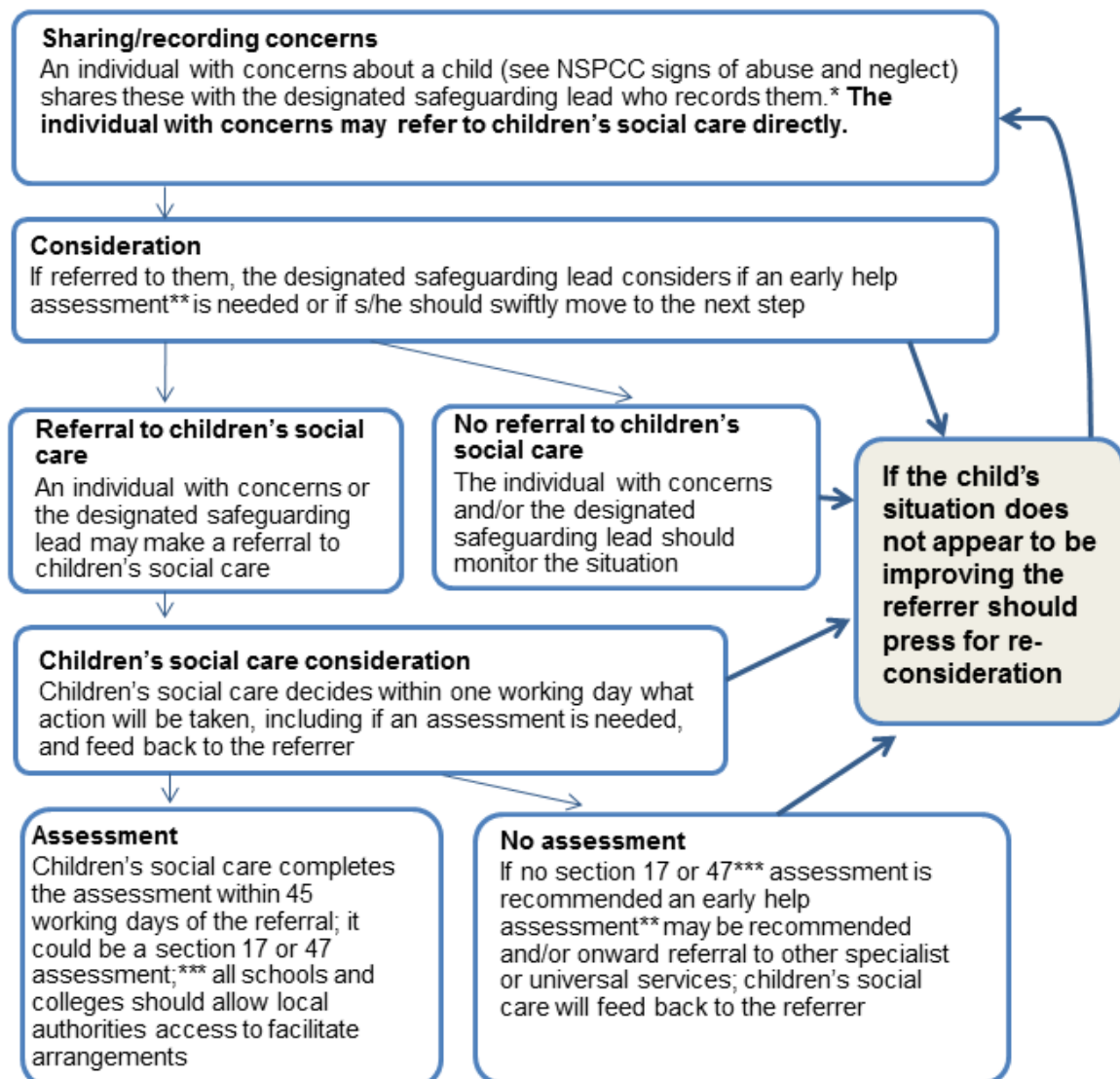
⁶ [Advice on whistleblowing](#) can be found on GOV.UK

not improve, sharing information too slowly and a lack of challenge to those who appear not to be taking action.⁷

Action when a child has suffered or is likely to suffer harm

This diagram illustrates what action should be taken and who should take it when there are concerns about a child. If, at any point, there is a risk of immediate serious harm to a child a referral should be made to children's social care immediately.

Anybody can make a referral.



* In cases which also involve an allegation of abuse against a staff member, see part four of this guidance which explains action the school or college should take in respect of the staff member

** Where a child and family would benefit from coordinated support from more than one agency (eg, education, health, housing, police) there should be an inter-agency assessment. These assessments should identify what help the child and family require to prevent needs escalating to a point where intervention would be needed via a statutory assessment under the Children Act 1989. The early help assessment should be undertaken by a lead professional who could be a teacher, special educational needs coordinator, General Practitioner (GP), family support worker, and/or health visitor.

*** Where there are more complex needs, help may be provided under section 17 of the Children Act 1989 (children in need). Where there are child protection concerns local authority services must make enquiries and decide if any action must be taken under section 47 of the Children Act 1989.

⁷ [Brandon et al, Learning from Serious Case Reviews \(SCRs\) 2011](#)

Types of abuse and neglect

20. **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. They may be abused by an adult or adults or another child or children.

21. **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.

22. **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 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.

23. **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 (including via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

24. **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 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.

Specific safeguarding issues

25. Expert and professional organisations are best placed to provide up-to-date guidance and practical support on specific safeguarding issues. For example NSPCC offers information for schools and colleges on the [TES website](#) and also on its own website www.nspcc.org.uk. Schools and colleges can also access broad government guidance on the issues listed below via the GOV.UK website:

- [child sexual exploitation \(CSE\)](#) – see also below
- [bullying including cyberbullying](#)
- [domestic violence](#)
- [drugs](#)
- [fabricated or induced illness](#)
- [faith abuse](#)
- [female genital mutilation \(FGM\)](#) – see also below
- [forced marriage](#)
- [gangs and youth violence](#)
- [gender-based violence/violence against women and girls \(VAWG\)](#)
- [mental health](#)
- [private fostering](#)
- [radicalisation](#)
- [sexting](#)
- [teenage relationship abuse](#)
- [trafficking](#)

Further information on Child Sexual Exploitation and Female Genital Mutilation

Child sexual exploitation (CSE) involves exploitative situations, contexts and relationships where young people receive something (for example food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, gifts, money or in some cases simply affection) as a result of engaging in sexual activities. Sexual exploitation can take many forms ranging from the seemingly 'consensual' relationship where sex is exchanged for affection or gifts, to serious organised crime by gangs and groups. What marks out exploitation is an imbalance of power in the relationship. The perpetrator always holds some kind of power over the victim which increases as the exploitative relationship develops. Sexual exploitation involves varying degrees of coercion, intimidation or enticement, including unwanted pressure from peers to have sex, sexual bullying including cyberbullying and grooming. However, it is also important to recognise that some young people who are being sexually exploited do not exhibit any external signs of this abuse.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM): professionals in all agencies, and individuals and groups in relevant communities, need to be alert to the possibility of a girl being at risk of FGM, or already having suffered FGM. There is a range of potential indicators that a child or young person may be at risk of FGM, which individually may not indicate risk but if there are two or more indicators present this could signal a risk to the child or young person. Victims of FGM are likely to come from a community that is known to practise FGM. Professionals should note that girls at risk of FGM may not yet be aware of the practice or that it may be conducted on them, so sensitivity should always be shown when approaching the subject. Warning signs that FGM may be about to take place, or may have already taken place, can be found on pages 11-12 of the Multi-Agency Practice Guidelines referred to previously. Staff should activate local safeguarding procedures, using existing national and local protocols for multi-agency liaison with police and children's social care.

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