Safeguarding and child protection: awareness raising and update

September 2023

Session Objectives

By the end of the session you should understand:

▸ your role in safeguarding children from harm

▸ how to identify the signs and indicators of child abuse in order to respond appropriately in accordance with the school's child protection policy and the established school procedures

▸ the current guidance and information available to staff and governors in relation to safeguarding, including the most up to date version of Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2023)

▸ how to respond to child welfare concerns – the processes at your school

A child centred and coordinated approach to safeguarding

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 professionals 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.
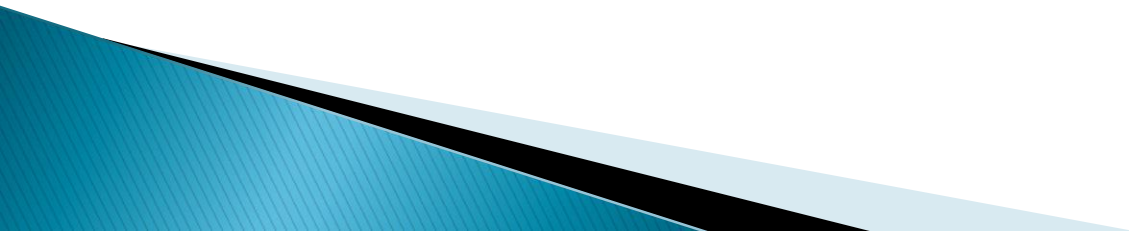
Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023

The role of school and college staff

School staff are particularly important as they are in a position to identify concerns early, provide help for children, and prevent concerns escalating.

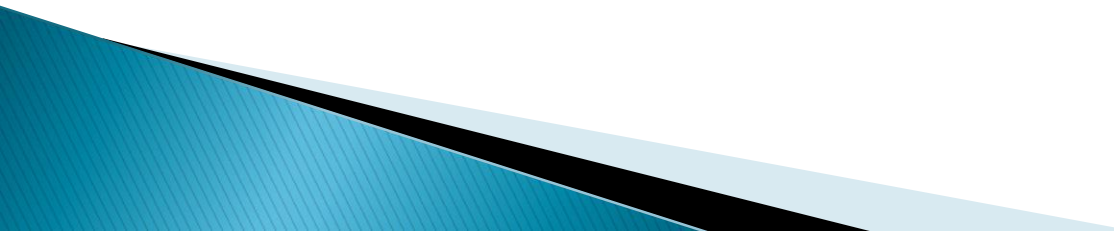Holistic safeguarding in schools has three strands:
- Creating a safe place for children and young people to share their concerns and experiences
- Creating a space where children feel safe to learn
- Looking after the well-being of staff

Who should you talk to if you have a concern about a child?

If staff members have any **concerns** about a child they will need to decide what action to take. There should be a conversation with the **designated safeguarding lead** to agree a course of action.

If a child is in immediate danger or is at risk of harm, a referral should be made to children's social care and/or the police immediately. Anyone can make a referral. Where referrals are not made by the designated safeguarding lead, the designated safeguarding lead should be informed as soon as possible that a referral has been made.

Safeguarding defined

The definition of safeguarding is
- 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
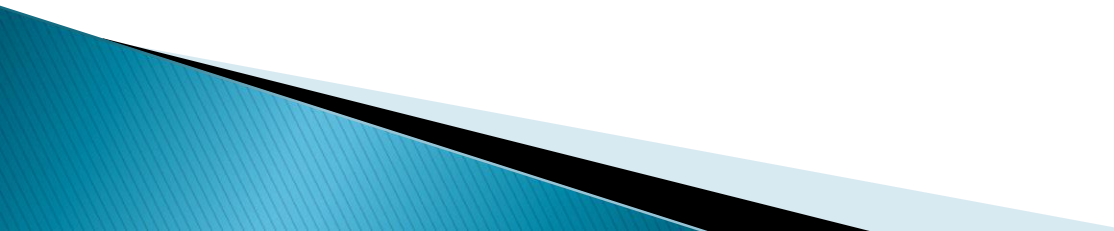- Taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.
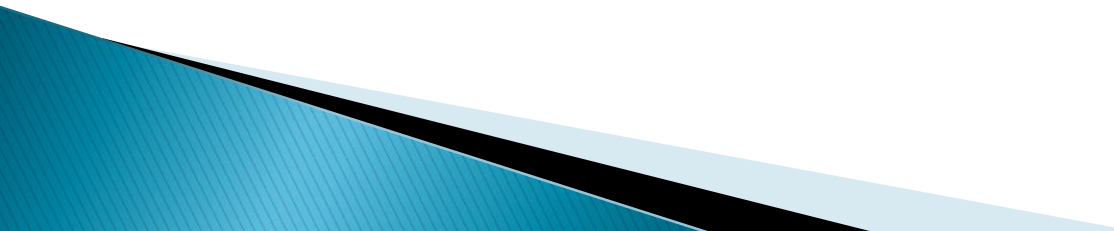
What school staff need to know

All staff should be aware of systems within their school which support safeguarding and these should be explained to them as part of staff induction. This should include the following:

- The child protection policy
- The staff code of conduct
- The school's behaviour policy
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023
- The role of the Designated Safeguarding Lead (Annex C)
- The safeguarding response to children who go missing from education

Copies of policies and a copy of Part 1 and Annex B (KCSiE 2023) should be provided to all staff (especially at induction)

Who should you refer to, if you have any concerns (including low-level concerns) about the behaviour of a member of staff or adult in your school – **or even yourself**?

- You should refer any concerns about other staff members to the headteacher/principal, or Chair of Governors if your concern is about the headteacher.
- Staff should be encouraged and confident to self-refer, where, for example, they have found themselves in a situation which could be misinterpreted, might appear compromising to others and/or on reflection they believe that they have behaved in such a way that they consider falls below the expected professional standards.

What is child abuse?

Child abuse is when a child is intentionally harmed by an adult or another child – it can be over a period of time but can also be a one-off action. It can be physical, sexual or emotional and it can happen in person or online. It can also be a lack of love, care and attention – this is neglect.

Categories of abuse

There are four main categories of abuse and neglect:

- ▸ Physical abuse
- ▸ Emotional abuse
- ▸ Sexual abuse
- ▸ Neglect

Knowing what to look for is vital to the early identification of abuse and neglect.

Headline facts and figures - 2022

Summary | **Table**

Children in need
404,310
up 4.1% from 2021 and up 3.9% from 2020. Highest number since 2018.

▶ Help

Children in need per 10,000 children
334.3
up from 321.2 in 2021 and up from 323.7 in 2020. Highest rate since 2018.

▶ Help

Child protection plans
50,920
up 1.8% from 2021 but down 1.1% from 2020.

▶ Help

Child protection plans per 10,000 children
42.1
up from 41.4 in 2021 but down from 42.8 in 2020.

▶ Help

Referrals
650,270
up 8.8% from 2021 and up 1.1% from 2020. Highest number since 2019.

▶ Help

Completed assessments
645,070
up 3.1% from 2021 but down 3.1% from 2020.

▶ Help

https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/characteristics-of-children-in-need

Child protection plans at 31 March 2022 by initial category of abuse

- Neglect remained the most common initial category of abuse recorded for children on protection plans in 2022, accounting for almost half of children. The next most common category continued to be emotional abuse, accounting for over one-third of children.
- In 2022, the number of children with emotional abuse, neglect, or physical abuse recorded as the initial category of abuse increased. In contrast, the number with sexual abuse was unchanged and the number with multiple categories of abuse decreased.

Online abuse

Children and young people may experience several types of abuse online:

- bullying/cyberbullying
- emotional abuse (this includes emotional blackmail, for example pressuring children and young people to comply with sexual requests via technology)
- sexting (pressure or coercion to create sexual images)
- sexual abuse
- sexual exploitation.

Children and young people can be revictimised (experience further abuse) when abusive content is recorded, uploaded or shared by others online. This can happen if the original abuse happened online or offline.
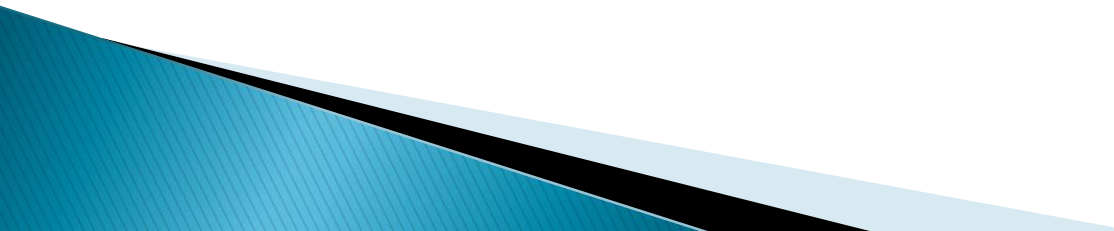
Families where there are obstacles and resistance

- Large sibling groups / multiple children in family *(additional pressures on parents)*
- Range of uncooperative behaviour by families towards professionals – four types of uncooperativeness:
  - Ambivalence
  - Avoidance
  - Confrontation
  - Violence
- Disguised compliance
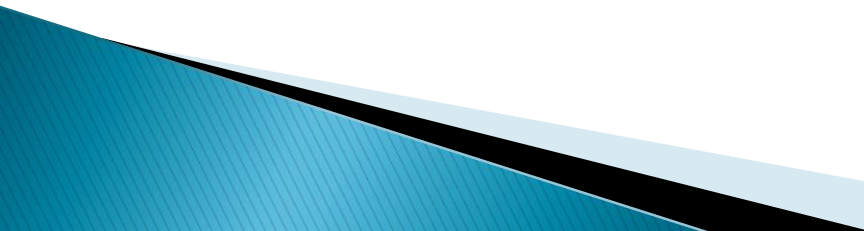
Parenting capacity:

There are many factors which can impact on parenting capacity:

- Substance misuse
- Mental health
- Learning disability
- Financial pressures

Cultural issues to consider:

Professionals should seek advice to gain better understanding, where there is a possibility of cultural factors making a family resistant to having professionals involved.

Professionals should:
- be aware of dates of the key religious events and customs;
- be aware of the cultural implications of gender;
- acknowledge cultural sensitivities and taboos e.g. dress codes
- consider asking for advice from local experts, who have links with the culture.
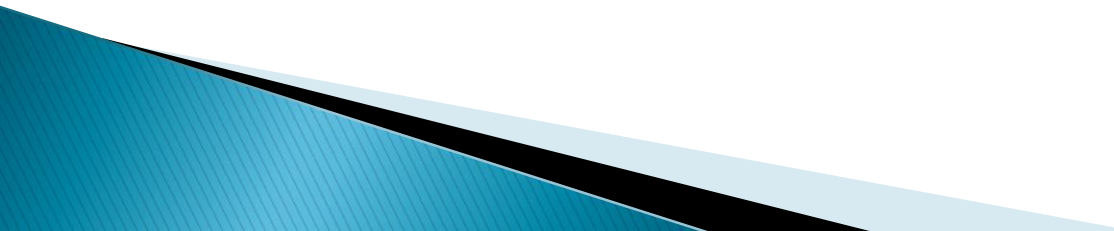
Current guidance

- Keeping children safe in education – statutory guidance for schools and colleges – September 2023
- Working together to safeguard children 2019
- When to call the police – guidance for schools (2020)
- What to do if you're worried a child is being abused – March 2015
- Child Sexual Exploitation guidance – DfE February 2017
- Inspecting safeguarding in early years, education and skills – Ofsted September 2022
- Teaching online safety in schools (DfE, June 2019)

Current guidance

- Guidance for safer working practice for those working with children and young people in education settings – January 2021
- SET Procedures –May 2022
- Information sharing – advice for practitioners – July 2018
- PREVENT Duty – DfE guidance July 2015
- Effective support for children and families in Essex – October 2021
- ESCB Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements 2020-21

Who are the three statutory safeguarding partners in the local authority?

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The three safeguarding partners (set out in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018) are the local authority *(in our case, ECC),* the police, and health *(three Integrated Care Boards covering the County of Essex).*

Education is named as a "relevant agency" and must follow the arrangements set out by the three safeguarding partners.

Keeping Children Safe in Education

▶ This is statutory guidance from the Department for Education.

▶ Schools and colleges in England must have regard to it when carrying out their duties to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

▶ For the purposes of this guidance "children" includes everyone under the age of 18.
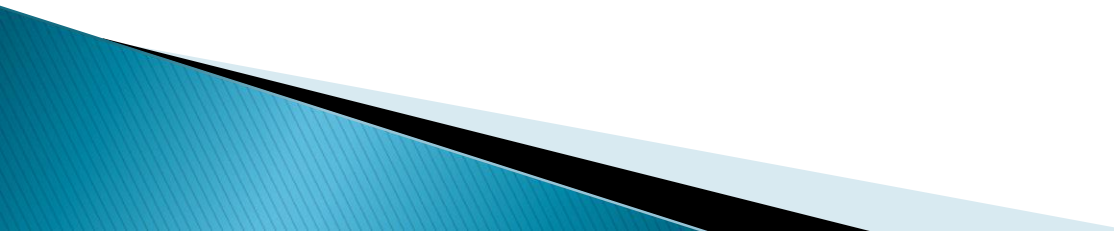
KCSiE: What's new in 2023

Key changes include:

- Staff need to understand their expectations, roles and responsibilities around filtering and monitoring systems (paragraph 14). This new emphasis is repeated several times throughout the guidance.

- The term 'children missing education' is different from 'children absent from education'. Children being absent from education for prolonged periods and/or on repeat can act as a warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues. The guidance specifies it's important that your school's response to persistently absent pupils and children missing education supports identifying any abuse, and in the case of absent pupils, helps prevent the risks of them becoming a child missing education in future (paragraph 175)

- That some children are at greater risk of harm than others, both **online and offline** (previously, it didn't make reference to online) (paragraph 170)
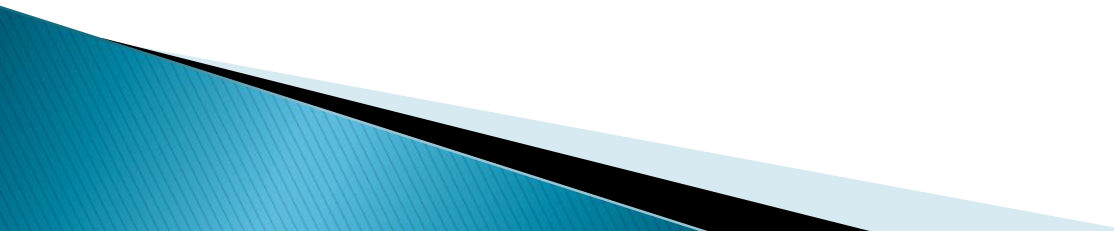
What is filtering and monitoring?

Filtering and monitoring systems are used to keep pupils safe when using your school's IT system.

- Filtering systems: block access to harmful sites and content.

- Monitoring systems: identify when a user accesses or searches for certain types of harmful content on school and college devices (it doesn't stop someone accessing it). Your school is then alerted to any concerning content so you can intervene and respond.

- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023 emphasises the importance of filtering and monitoring systems and processes in school. Your Child Protection Policy should include how your school approaches filtering and monitoring on school devices and school networks

- To further support schools and colleges in England to meet digital and technology standards, the Department for Education published Filtering and Monitoring Standards in March 2023. In addition to aspects of both filtering and monitoring systems, these standards detail the allocation of roles and responsibilities, and that schools and colleges should be checking their filtering and monitoring provision at least annually.

2 minute discussion

- Do you know what your own responsibilities are in relation to filtering and monitoring?
- How would you report a safeguarding or technical concern about something online?

Your responsibilities might include:

- Monitoring what is on a pupil's screen
- Ensuring that unsuitable material is not accessed
- Teaching topics that could create unusual activity on the filtering logs – and advising the IT support accordingly
- Recognising failure in the software or abuse of the system
- Understanding and resolving unreasonable restrictions that affect teaching and learning or administrative tasks
- Noticing abbreviations or misspellings that allow access to restricted material
- Being aware of concerns raised by pupils

Refer your concerns

Concerns about a child's welfare can vary greatly in terms of their nature and seriousness, how they have been identified and over what duration they have arisen.

If you have concerns about a child, you should ask for help.

Follow your child protection policy and speak to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Managing a disclosure

Children experiencing distress or abuse may seek to 'tell' in school, often because this is the place where they feel most safe, secure and listened to. It is not unusual for them to choose members of staff seen to be on the periphery of the staff team such as midday supervisors, caretakers or classroom support staff because they may be perceived as having less authority, more time and be less intimidating.

Responding to an initial disclosure

There is helpful information in KCSiE on responding to an initial disclosure.

The updated procedures explain that staff:

- **Don't need to wait for a child to make a disclosure, they should act on any concerns immediately**
- May overhear a conversation that suggest a child may have been harmed or a child's behaviour may be an indicator
- May confiscate devices for evidence to hand to the police, if the report includes an online element
- Can ask children outright if they've been harmed and what the nature of the harm was

Responding to an initial disclosure

The updated procedures explain that staff:

- Should keep in mind that certain children may face additional barriers to telling someone because of their vulnerability, disability, gender, ethnicity and/or sexual orientation
- Should reflect back, using the child's language, when hearing a report
- Should recognise it may only be the first incident reported, rather than representative of a singular incident and that trauma can impact memory, so children may not be able to recall all details or timeline of abuse
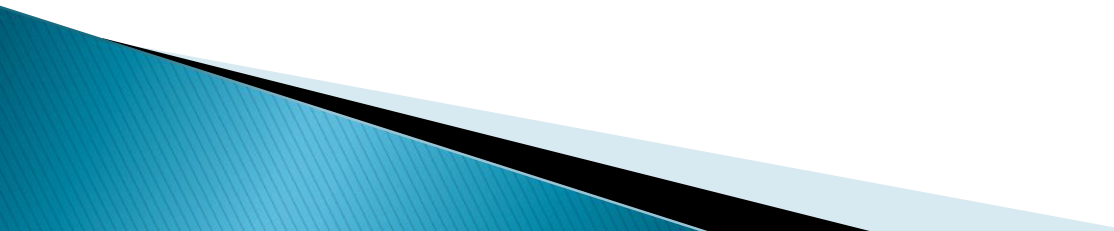
So, what do I do if a child asks to talk to me about a concern?

- Listen to the child - let them do the talking and try not to say things for them
- Do not promise them confidentiality
- After the child has told you the problem, try to record their exact words
- You need to record enough detail to support your concerns that they have a serious issue/are at risk, but stick to basic facts
- After the meeting, complete the concern form and report to the DSL
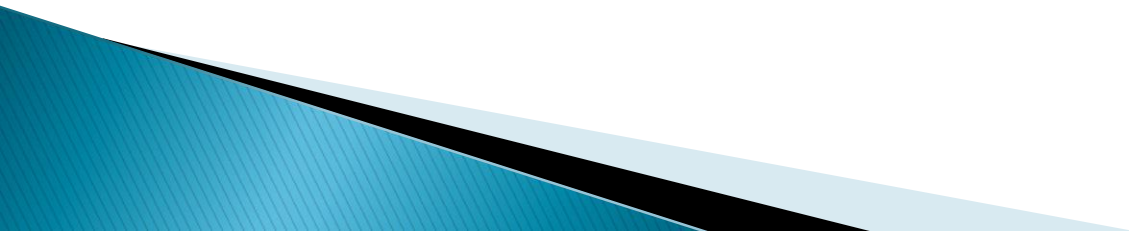
Referral processes in your school

- You should record, in writing, all concerns and discussions about a child's welfare, the decisions made and the reasons for those decisions.
- Safeguarding forms and record keeping at your school.
- Never leave any situation for a few days to allow you or the child to 'think about it' – the child could be at risk. Act immediately.

What should you do if you are aware that a child has gone missing (or is absent) from education?
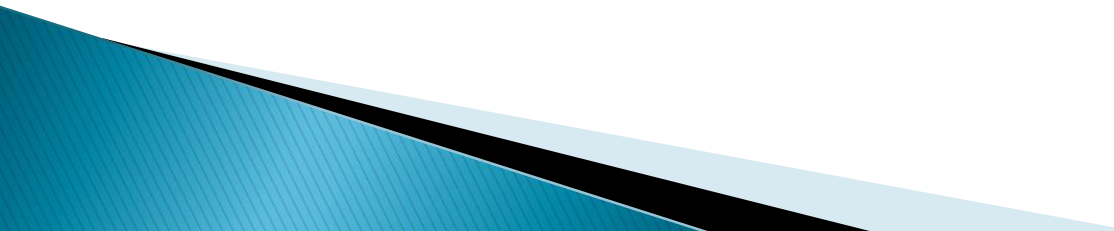
- Staff should be aware of their school's unauthorised absence and children missing from education procedures and ensure that they follow them.
- You will find this information in the school's Child Protection Policy.
- All staff should be aware that children going missing, particularly repeatedly, can act as a vital warning sign of a range of safeguarding possibilities. This may include abuse and neglect, which may include sexual abuse or exploitation and child criminal exploitation. It may indicate mental health problems, risk of substance abuse, risk of travelling to conflict zones, risk of female genital mutilation or risk of forced marriage. Early intervention is necessary to identify the existence of any underlying safeguarding risk and to help prevent the risks of a child going missing in future.

What should you do if you think that a concern you have raised has not been followed up?

- All staff and volunteers should feel able to raise concerns about poor or unsafe practice and potential failures in the school or college's safeguarding regime and know that such concerns will be taken seriously by the senior leadership team.

- Appropriate whistleblowing procedures, which are suitably reflected in staff training and staff behaviour policies, should be in place for such concerns to be raised with the school's senior leadership team.

- 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 8:00 am to 8:00 pm, Monday to Friday or email: help@nspcc.org.uk

Summing up what we can do to safeguarding our children and young people

- Always assume '**it could happen here**' and be **professionally curious**

- Always **act in the child's best interests**, including alleged perpetrators, and when searching a child

- Be on the lookout for **signs of abuse**, and in particular, for **changes in a child**

- If you **see something, say something** – including concerns about staff and our safeguarding practice

- Always **make a written record** too

Any questions?

▸ Thank you for your time today – please follow up any concerns or questions with your Designated Safeguarding Lead.