

Safeguarding guidance for schools

A guide by Virtual College

Introduction

For social workers, teachers and others working in childcare, complying with the government's latest advice on safeguarding guidance for schools is essential.

The latest guidelines come in the form of the Department of Education's 'Keeping children safe in education', which was last updated in May 2016. This replaces the 2015 guidance and will come into force for schools on September 5th 2016. It is recommended that this document is read alongside 'Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015' and 'What to do if you are worried a child is being abused 2015- Advice for practitioners.'

It is aimed at governing bodies of maintained (including nursery) schools and colleges, non-maintained special schools and colleges, proprietors of independent schools and management committees of pupil referral units, as well as further education colleges and sixth form colleges.

In this guide, we'll go through an overview of what is contained within the official documentation. People working in schools are strongly advised to read at least part one of the document.

Part 1: Safeguarding information for staff

The document sets out that:

"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."

It also notes that 'children' refers to everyone under 18, and that where a child is suffering significant harm, or is in a position where this is likely to happen, action must be taken to protect them. It should also be taken to promote the welfare of a child in need of extra support, even in the case that they are not suffering harm or at immediate risk.

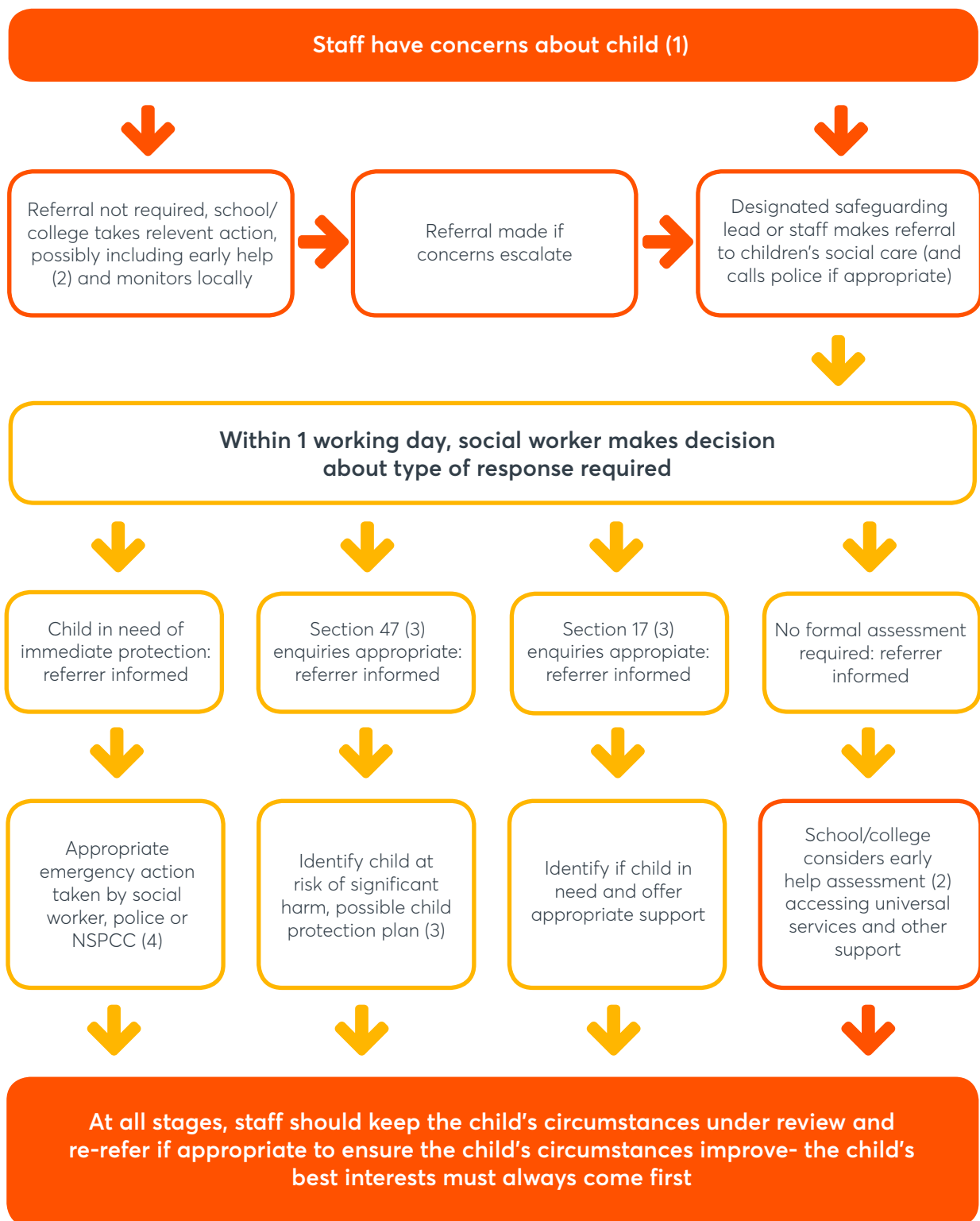
The safeguarding of children is everyone's responsibility, with everyone who comes into contact with children, their families and carers, having a role to play in safeguarding children, according to the document.

School and college staff have a duty to safeguard children's wellbeing and maintain public trust in the teaching profession, according to the advice, and they must also provide a safe environment in which the children can learn, identify those children who may need early help, and support social workers in their decisions surrounding individual children.

Those working at these institutions need to be aware of the safeguarding systems within their own organisation, it was noted, and appropriate child protection training must be provided.

In part one, the document also provides advice on what staff should look out for when it comes to identifying a child who may be in danger, or currently suffering abuse, and how to raise these concerns. It also explains how to go about raising concerns about another staff member, and what to do if they have safeguarding concerns regarding practices within the school or college.





school/college action



other agency action

1. In cases which also involve an allegation of abuse against the staff member, see part four of this guidance.
2. 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 co-ordinated 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.
3. 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. This can include s17 assessments of children in need and s47 assessments of children at risk of significant harm. Full details are in chapter one of **Working Together to Safeguard Children**.
4. This could include applying for an Emergency Protection Order (EPO).

Types of abuse and neglect

It may be necessary for the individual to identify the type of abuse in question.

According to the document, the definition of 'abuse' is as follows.

"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."

It then breaks abuse down into four different types: physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and neglect.

Specific safeguarding issues

Drilling down into more specific issues that all those working with children need to be aware of, the guidance recommends that when addressing such problems, or potential problems, people go to professional and expert organisations. Here they will be offered up-to-date guidance and practical support on specific safeguarding issues.

However, the GOV.UK website does offer broad guidance on the following issues:

- Child missing from education
- Child missing from home or care
- Child sexual exploitation (CSE)
- Bullying including cyberbullying
- Domestic violence
- Drugs
- Fabricated or induced illness
- Faith abuse
- Female genital mutilation (FGM)
- Forced marriage
- Gangs and youth violence
- Gender-based violence/violence against women and girls (VAWG)
- Hate
- Mental health
- Missing children and adults strategy
- Private fostering
- Preventing radicalisation
- Relationship abuse
- Sexting
- Trafficking

Further information on a child missing from education

The guidance contains a section explaining what to do when a child is missing from education – something that every child has a right to.

It states: “Governing bodies and proprietors should put in place appropriate safeguarding responses to children who go missing from education, particularly on repeat occasions, to help identify the risk of abuse and neglect including sexual abuse or exploitation and to help prevent the risks of their going missing in future.”

In addition to this, the government’s missing children and adults strategy and the department’s Children Missing Education guidance provides information that governing bodies and proprietors might find useful when considering children who go missing from education.

Part 2: The management of safeguarding

Governing bodies and proprietors also have legal duties under the legislation, which is detailed in part 2.

This section tackles the subject of inter-agency working when it comes to ensuring schools or colleges are cooperating with such investigations. According to the document, schools and colleges should have a senior board level member of staff, or equivalent, to take leadership responsibility for the organisation’s safeguarding arrangements.

It also looks at how governing bodies should go about safeguarding policies. Of course, it notes that effective child protection and staff behaviour policies must be put in place, and, as mentioned above, appropriate safeguarding policies should be put in place to protect children who go missing from education.



Furthermore, it is noted that it is down to headteachers to ensure that the policies put in place are followed by all staff.

Governing bodies must also designate an appropriate safeguarding lead, it is underlined, which should be explicit in the individual's job role. This should be an appropriate senior member of staff from the school or college leadership team.

The document states that schools can also decide whether or not they appoint more than one deputy to the safeguarding lead. They must liaise and share data with local agencies and work with other agencies as part of the job, making sure that data protection fears do not stand in the way of information sharing.

It was also underlined that: **"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."**

It should also be considered how children can be taught about safeguarding as part of a broad and balanced curriculum.

In addition, the document notes that Ofsted inspections will look at the quality of safeguarding, and emphasises the importance of safer recruitment, designed to prevent people who pose a risk of harm from working with children. Staff training and online safety are also outlined within the guidance.

Allegations of abuse

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In the case the allegations of abuse are made against a member of staff, these allegations must be referred to the designated officer at the local authority. In the case that a person in regulated activity has been dismissed or removed due to safeguarding concerns, there must also be procedures in place to make a referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS). Failure to meet these criteria is a legal offence.

When it comes to allegations of abuse made against other children, there must be procedures in place to handle such issues, and the child's wishes and feelings must be taken into account when working out what action to take and what services to provide in order to protect individual children.

However, it was noted: **"Systems should be in place for children to express their views and give feedback. Ultimately any systems and processes should operate with the best interests of the child at their heart."**

It was underlined that schools offering boarding facilities need to be particularly alert to safeguarding issues in order to protect their students. Schools who have looked after children among their student body should appoint a teacher to promote the educational achievement of these pupils.

The guidance also highlighted that children with special education needs (SEN) face additional safeguarding challenges.



Part 3: Safer recruitment

Part 3 of the guidance underlines the importance of safer recruitment when it comes to people who are going to be working with children.

People involved in recruiting for such roles must ensure they read this part of the document carefully, as failing to comply could have devastating consequences.

It takes recruiters through recruitment, selection and pre-employment vetting, the different types of DBS check that may need carrying out, and pre-appointment checks.

It is noted that in a school or college, a supervised volunteer who frequently teaches or looks after children is not in regulated activity. Here, the Department for Education (DfE) has published guidance on this on GOV.UK.

Part 4: Allegations of abuse made against teachers and other staff

This section is in regard to managing cases of allegations that could mean the person in question would pose a risk of harm if they continued to work in regular or close contact with children in their present position, or in any capacity.

In the case that it is alleged that a teacher or member of staff in a school or college that provides education for children under the age of 18 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; or
- Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates he or she would pose a risk of harm to children.

This guidance starts with the initial considerations someone looking into such allegations would need to think about and goes on to discuss how those involved must be looked after. There is also instruction when it comes to managing the situation and exit arrangements.

If there is a criminal investigation, specific actions will need to be taken between the police and the organisation in which it happened.



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