



Department
for Education

Keeping children safe in education 2026

**Statutory guidance for schools
and colleges**

September 2026

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Summary

The status of this guidance

This is statutory guidance from the Department for Education ('the Department') issued under Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 (as amended), the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, the Non-Maintained Special Schools (England) Regulations 2015 and the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 (as amended). 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 means everyone under the age of 18.

About this guidance

We use the terms “**must**” and “**should**” throughout the guidance. We use the term “**must**” when the person in question is legally required to do something, and “**should**” when the advice set out should be followed unless there is good reason not to. The guidance **should** be read alongside:

- statutory guidance [Working Together to Safeguard Children](#), and
- departmental advice [What to do if you're worried a child is being abused: advice for practitioners](#), and
- statutory guidance, section 3 of [Early years foundation stage \(EYFS\) statutory framework - GOV.UK](#) (for children aged 0 to 5 in school-based nurseries and reception).

Unless otherwise specified:

- ‘**school**’ means: all schools whether maintained, non-maintained or independent schools (including academies, free schools and alternative provision academies), maintained nursery schools¹ and pupil referral units.
- ‘**college**’ means further education colleges and sixth-form colleges as established under the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 and institutions designated as being within the further education sector.² College also means providers of post-16 Education as set out in the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009

¹ The [Early Years Foundation Stage Framework](#) (EYFS) is mandatory for all early years’ providers. It applies to all schools, including maintained nursery schools that have early years provision. Maintained nursery schools, like the other schools listed under ‘About this guidance’, must have regard to Keeping children safe in education when carrying out duties to safeguard and promote the welfare of children (by virtue of section 175(2) of the Education Act 2002 – see footnote 19 for further detail on this requirement).

² Under section 28 of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 (‘designated institutions’).

(as amended).³ 16-19 Academies, Special Post-16 institutions and Independent Training Providers. For colleges, the guidance relates to their responsibilities towards children who are receiving education or training at these institutions.

Victims and alleged perpetrator(s)

For the purposes of this guidance, we, in places, use the term '**victim**'. It is a widely recognised and understood term. It is important that schools and colleges recognise that not everyone who has been subjected to abuse considers themselves a victim or would want to be described in this way. Ultimately, schools and colleges should be conscious of this when managing any incident and be prepared to use any term with which the child is most comfortable.

For the purpose of this guidance, we, in places, use the term '**alleged perpetrator(s)**' and where appropriate '**perpetrator(s)**'. These are widely used and recognised terms and the most appropriate to aid effective drafting of guidance. However, schools and colleges should think very carefully about terminology, especially when speaking in front of children, not least because in some cases the abusive behaviour will have been harmful to the perpetrator as well. As above, the use of appropriate terminology will be for schools and colleges to determine, as appropriate, on a case-by-case basis.

Nudes and semi-nudes, including where generated by AI

For the purposes of this guidance, the term '**making or sharing nudes and semi-nudes**' refers to the creation, sending or posting of nude or semi-nude images by young people under the age of 18. The term '**images**' includes all visual content, such as photographs, videos and livestreams.

We use the term '**nudes**' because it is the most widely understood by young people and best captures the full range of image-sharing behaviours covered in this guidance.

Images may be taken by the child themselves (sometimes referred to as 'self-generated imagery') or taken or created by another person. They may also be digitally altered or wholly generated using artificial intelligence, including what are sometimes described as 'deepfakes' or 'deep nudes'.

Data Protection Act 2018, the UK GDPR and the Data (Use and Access) Act 2025 – 'data protection laws'

Throughout this guidance, the term '**data protection laws**' refers collectively to the Data Protection Act 2018, the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR), and the Data (Use and Access) Act 2025.

³ [Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 \(as amended\)](#)

Who this guidance is for

This statutory guidance should be read and followed by:

- **governing bodies of maintained schools** (including maintained nursery schools) and colleges which includes providers of post-16 Education as set out in the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 (as amended): 16-19 Academies, Special Post-16 institutions and Independent Training Providers,
- **proprietors of independent schools** (including academies, free schools and alternative provision academies) and non-maintained special schools. In the case of academies, free schools and alternative provision academies, the proprietor will be the academy trust,
- **management committees of pupil referral units** (PRUs), and
- **senior leadership teams**

Throughout the guidance, reference to '**governing bodies and proprietors**' includes management committees unless otherwise stated.

School and college staff

It is essential that **everybody** working in a school or college understands their safeguarding responsibilities. Governing bodies and proprietors should ensure that those staff who work directly with children read **at least Part one** of this guidance.

Governing bodies and proprietors, working with their senior leadership teams and especially their designated safeguarding lead, should now also ensure that those staff who do not work directly with children read **Part one** of this guidance.

Governing bodies and proprietors should ensure that mechanisms are in place to assist staff to understand and discharge their roles and responsibilities as set out in Part one of this guidance.

What this guidance replaces

This guidance replaces Keeping children safe in education September 2025 version. A summary of changes is included at Annex C.

Part one: Safeguarding information for all staff

What school and college staff should know and do

A child centred and coordinated approach to safeguarding

1. Schools and colleges and their staff are an important part of the wider safeguarding system for children. This system is described in the statutory guidance [Working Together to Safeguard Children](#).
2. Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is everyone's responsibility. **'Children'** means everyone under the age of 18. 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.
3. No single practitioner can have a full picture of a child's needs and circumstances. 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. Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is defined for the purposes of this guidance as:
 - providing help and support to meet the needs of children as soon as problems emerge,
 - protecting children from maltreatment, whether that is within or outside the home, including online,
 - preventing the 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, and
 - taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

The role of school and college staff

4. School and college staff are in a position to identify concerns early, provide help for children, and prevent concerns from escalating.
5. All staff have a responsibility to provide a safe environment in which children can learn.
6. All staff should be prepared to identify children who may benefit from Family

Help.⁴ Family 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.

7. Any staff member who has any concerns about a child's welfare should follow the processes set out in paragraphs 57-63. Staff should expect to support children's social care and other agencies following any referral.

8. Every school and college should have a designated safeguarding lead who will provide support to staff to carry out their safeguarding duties and who will liaise closely with other services such as local authority children's social care.

9. The designated safeguarding lead (and any deputies) are most likely to have a complete safeguarding picture within education and be the most appropriate person to advise on the response to safeguarding concerns.

10. The Teachers' Standards 2012 state that teachers (which includes headteachers) should safeguard children's wellbeing and maintain public trust in the teaching profession as part of their professional duties.⁵

What school and college staff need to know

11. All staff 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 should include the:

- 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)⁶,
- 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, and
- role of the designated safeguarding lead (including the identity of the designated safeguarding lead and any deputies).

Copies of policies and a copy of **Part one** of this document should be provided to **all** staff at induction.

⁴ Detailed information on Family Help can be found in [Working Together to Safeguard Children](#).

⁵ [Teachers' standards](#).

⁶ All schools are required to have a behaviour policy (full details are [here](#)). If a college chooses to have a behaviour policy, it should be provided to staff as described above.

12. All staff should receive appropriate safeguarding and child protection training (including online safety which, amongst other things, includes an understanding of the expectations, applicable roles and responsibilities in relation to filtering and monitoring – see paragraphs 173-177 for further information) at induction. The training should be regularly updated. In addition, all staff should receive safeguarding and child protection (including online safety) updates (for example, via email, e-bulletins, and staff meetings), as required, and at least annually, to continue to provide them with relevant skills and knowledge to safeguard children effectively.
13. 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
14. All staff should know what to do if a child tells them they are being abused, exploited, 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 designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) and local authority children's social care. Staff should never promise a child that they will not tell anyone about a report of any form of abuse, as this may ultimately not be in the best interests of the child.
15. 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 any form of abuse and/or neglect. Nor should a victim ever be made to feel ashamed for making a report.

16. All staff should 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 are 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 designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) if they have concerns about a child. It is also important that staff determine how best to build trusted relationships which facilitate communication with children and young people.

17. All staff should recognise that children may experience prejudice-based harm, including racism, faith-based prejudice, and other forms of discrimination. Such 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.

What school and college staff should look out for

Support before statutory intervention

18. Any child may benefit from support before statutory intervention, including from universal services and community-based Early Help, or the targeted early help level of Family Help. All school and college staff should be particularly alert to the potential need for additional support 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 and/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 of being permanently excluded from schools, colleges and in Alternative Provision or a Pupil Referral Unit
- is at risk of exploitation, modern slavery, trafficking, including criminal or sexual 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 issues and domestic abuse
- is misusing alcohol and other drugs themselves
- is at risk of honour or faith-based abuse such as Female Genital Mutilation or Forced Marriage, and
- is a privately fostered child.

Abuse, neglect and exploitation

19. All staff should be aware of the indicators of abuse, neglect, exploitation and modern slavery (see below), understanding that children can be at risk of harm inside and outside of the school/college, inside and outside of home, and online. Exercising professional curiosity and knowing what to look for is vital for the early identification of abuse and neglect so that staff are able to identify cases of children who may be in need of help or protection.

20. 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.

21. All staff, but especially the designated safeguarding lead (and deputies) should consider whether children are at risk of abuse or exploitation in situations outside their families. 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 (teenage relationship abuse - including physical, sexual, emotional abuse, and stalking), criminal exploitation (including financial exploitation), serious youth violence, county lines and radicalisation.

22. All staff should be aware that technology is a significant component in many safeguarding and wellbeing issues. Children are at risk of abuse and other risks online as well as face to face. In many cases abuse and other risks will take

place concurrently both online and offline.

23. Children can also abuse other children online, this can take the form of abusive, harassing, and misogynistic/misandrist messages, the non-consensual making or sharing of nudes or semi-nudes, especially around chat groups, and the sharing of abusive images and pornography to those who do not want to receive such content.

24. **In all cases, if staff are unsure, they should always speak to the designated safeguarding lead or a deputy.**

Indicators of abuse and neglect

25. **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.

26. **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.

27. **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 verbal abuse, such as persistent criticism, belittling, or name-calling, as well as 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.

28. **Sexual abuse:** involves forcing, causing or inciting a child to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, such as acts of penetration, whether that is with part of a person's body or an object (e.g. rape or assault by penetration), and non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing, and touching over clothing. Sexual abuse 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 as well as offline, 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. Children can be sexually abused within the family, an institution or a community setting, and are more likely to know their abuser than not. The sexual abuse of children by other children is a specific safeguarding issue in education and all staff should be aware of it and of their school or college's policy and procedures for dealing with it. There are specific [offences for children under 13](#), who can never provide valid consent to sexual activity and there are specific offences which make clear that [sexual activity with a child under 16 is an offence](#), regardless of whether they agreed to that activity.

29. **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 caregivers); or ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

Safeguarding issues

30. **All** staff should have an awareness of safeguarding issues that often overlap and can put children at risk of harm (including but not limited to those listed below). The following behaviours and indicators can be signs that children are at risk:

- drug taking and/or alcohol misuse
- unexplainable and/or persistent absences from education

- serious violence, criminal exploitation (including that linked to county lines), radicalisation, and
- consensual and non-consensual making or sharing of nudes or semi-nudes.

Additional information on these safeguarding issues and information on other safeguarding issues is included in Annex A.

Child-on-child abuse (including harassment and violence)

31. **All** staff should be aware that children can abuse other children (often referred to as child-on-child abuse), and that it can happen both inside and outside of school or college and online. **All** staff should be clear as to the school or college's policy and procedures with regard to child-on-child abuse and the important role they have to play in preventing it and responding where they believe a child may be at risk from it.
32. **All** staff should recognise that racism, faith-targeted abuse, and other forms of discriminatory behaviour may have a significant impact on a child's welfare, wellbeing and sense of safety and should be considered within safeguarding practice where appropriate.
33. **All** staff should understand that even if there are no reports in their schools or colleges it does not mean it is not happening. It may be the case that abuse is not being reported. As such it is important that when staff have **any** concerns regarding child-on-child abuse (whether these concerns are thought to have taken place on or off-site) they should speak to their designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy). As part of this, schools should also try to be alert to when children might be at highest risk around the school day (for example immediately after school).
34. It is essential that **all** staff understand the importance of challenging inappropriate behaviours between children that are abusive in nature. Examples of which are listed below. Downplaying certain behaviours, for example dismissing sexual harassment as "just banter", "just having a laugh", "part of growing up" or "boys being boys" can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviour, misogyny, an unsafe environment for children and in worst case scenarios a culture that normalises abuse leading to children accepting it as normal and not coming forward to report it.
35. **All** staff should be aware that child-on-child abuse is a safeguarding issue for both the victim and alleged perpetrator.
36. As well as knowing how to respond to concerns, **all** staff should know that child-on-child abuse is preventable. As well as knowing how to recognise behaviours and indicators of risk early, staff should know that timely, evidence-

based support can be key to preventing children from going on to commit abuse or violence.

37. Child-on-child abuse is most likely to include, but may not be limited to:

- bullying (including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying),
- discriminatory behaviour, including racism, faith-targeted abuse, and other prejudice-based incidents,
- abuse in intimate personal relationships between children (sometimes known as ‘teenage relationship abuse’),
- physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm (this may include an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages physical abuse),
- serious physical assault and harm, or the threat of harm with a weapon,
- sexual violence⁷ such as rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault (this may include an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages sexual violence),
- sexual harassment⁸ such as sexual comments, remarks, jokes and online sexual harassment, which may be standalone or part of a broader pattern of abuse,
- 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,
- consensual and non-consensual making or sharing of nudes and semi-nudes⁹,
- upskirting¹⁰ which typically involves taking a picture under a person’s clothing without their permission, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress, or alarm, 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 may also include an online element).

Child criminal exploitation (CCE) and child sexual exploitation (CSE)

38. Both CCE and CSE are forms of abuse that occur where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance in power to coerce, manipulate or

⁷ For further information about sexual violence see Part five.

⁸ For further information about sexual harassment see Part five.

⁹ UKCIS guidance: [Sharing nudes and semi-nudes advice for education settings](#)

¹⁰ For further information about ‘upskirting’ see Annex A.

deceive a child into taking part in criminal or sexual activity. It may involve an exchange for something the victim 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. This can be committed or facilitated by an organised network or gang, and the victim may identify as being part of this group. CCE and CSE 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. This may constitute modern slavery, and further information is available in the [Modern Slavery statutory guidance](#). In accordance with this guidance, a relevant child protection and modern slavery referral should be completed where a potential victim of CCE or CSE is identified.

Child criminal exploitation (CCE)¹¹

39. Some specific forms of CCE can include children being forced or manipulated into transporting drugs or money through county lines¹², working in cannabis factories, shoplifting or pickpocketing. They can also be forced or manipulated into committing vehicle crime or threatening/committing serious violence to others.

40. Children can become trapped by this type of exploitation, as perpetrators can threaten victims (and their families) with violence or entrap and coerce them into debt. They may be coerced into carrying weapons such as knives or begin to carry a knife for a sense of protection from harm from others. Children who are criminally exploited should have their vulnerabilities recognised by adults and professionals (particularly older children) and should be treated as victims. It is not possible for a child to consent to be exploited, abused or trafficked, and they may not recognise that it is happening to them.

41. It is important to note 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 criminal exploitation too. It is also important to note that both boys and girls being criminally exploited may be at higher risk of sexual exploitation.

Child sexual exploitation (CSE)

42. CSE is a form of child sexual abuse. Sexual abuse may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or penetration with an object) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing, and

¹¹ See information on CCE definition on page 48 of [Home Office's Serious Violence Strategy](#)

¹² County lines is a term used to describe gangs and organised criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs using dedicated mobile phone lines or other form of "deal line". Links to the Home Office's County Lines advice is provided within the serious violence information on page 171.

touching outside clothing. It may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in the production of sexual images, forcing children to look at sexual images or watch sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways or grooming a child in preparation for abuse including via the internet.

43. CSE can occur over time or be a one-off occurrence and may happen without the child's immediate knowledge, for example through others sharing videos or images of them on social media.

44. CSE can 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. This can be committed by an individual or an organised network¹³ and most sexual abuse is committed by those previously known to the victim. Some children do not realise they are being exploited and may believe they are in a genuine romantic relationship. As with CCE, victims are not always recognised and can be criminalised for actions they take whilst under coercion. This remains a significant concern, as professionals continue to encounter cases where children are manipulated, groomed, and exploited without fully understanding the abuse they are experiencing.

Domestic abuse

45. 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, well-being, and ability to learn.

Female genital mutilation (FGM)

46. Whilst **all** staff should speak to the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) with regard to any concerns about female genital mutilation (FGM), there is a specific **legal duty on teachers**.¹⁴ If a teacher, in the course of their work in the profession, discovers that an act of FGM appears to have been carried out on a girl under the age of 18, the teacher **must** report this to the police. See page 176

¹³ The Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse: An organised network is characterised by two or more individuals (whether identified or not) who are known to (or associated with) one another and are known to be involved in or to facilitate the sexual exploitation of children. Being involved in the sexual exploitation of children includes introducing them to other individuals for the purpose of exploitation, trafficking a child for the purpose of sexual exploitation, taking payment for sexual activities with a child or allowing their property to be used for sexual activities with a child.

¹⁴ Under section 5B(11) (a) of the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003, "teacher" means, in relation to England, a person within section 141A(1) of the Education Act 2002 (persons employed or engaged to carry out teaching work at schools and other institutions in England).

for further information.

Mental health

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

48. **Only** appropriately trained professionals should attempt to make a diagnosis of a mental health problem. Education staff, however, 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. If a child is struggling with their mental health, self-harming, has an eating disorder or is experiencing suicidal ideation and making plans to end their life, there are likely to be potential warning signs which education staff are well placed to recognise.

These could include:

- significant changes in behaviour,
- ongoing difficulty sleeping,
- withdrawing from social situations,
- not wanting to do things they usually like, and
- physical signs of self-harm or neglecting themselves.

49. Not every child who exhibits these behaviours is suicidal or has a mental health concern. However, by identifying these and other potential warning signs, education staff can identify children who may be struggling with their mental health and contemplating suicide and offer support and vital early intervention. Schools and colleges should ensure that any interventions they offer are evidenced as safe and effective and appropriate for the need and phase of education.

50. If staff have a concern about a child's mental health that is also a safeguarding concern, they should follow their child protection policy and speak to their designated safeguarding lead or deputy. If staff feel that a child is in danger, they should call 999 or arrange for them to be taken to A&E immediately by a parent/carer or other suitable person. If a child needs help urgently for their mental health, but it's not an emergency, staff can get help from NHS 111 online or call 111 and select the mental health option.

Serious violence

51. Serious violence is a continuing safeguarding concern. It may involve physical assault, carrying, threatening with, or using weapons, often in the context of peer conflict or bullying, and it can also be associated with criminal exploitation. Staff should report any concerns about a child carrying or using a weapon (or expressing intent to do so) to the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy). The designated safeguarding lead should assess the risk to both the individual pupil and others in the school, considering wider information or concerns, and take appropriate action. Depending on the risk, they should put in place a safety and support plan, and where relevant, consider action to de-escalate peer conflict.

52. Schools play a key role in protecting children from violence, safeguarding victims, as well as those who may be at risk of, or are involved in committing violence (who may also be victims themselves). Staff should be alert to signs that a child may be at risk of or involved in serious violence. These risks are higher for children with disrupted education (e.g. suspensions, permanent exclusions, time in alternative provision) or a history of offending. Schools should also try to be alert to when children might be at highest risk around the school day (for example, immediately after school). Further information on indicators, risk factors, and protective actions relating to serious violence is provided in Annex A.

53. Early, evidence-based support for those considered at risk, as well as at critical points when concerns emerge, is vital. This includes access to trusted adults, social and emotional skill support, and, where available, targeted interventions such as mentoring or therapeutic support (practical guidance on evidenced support is available from the [Youth Endowment Fund \(YEF\)](#) (the “what works” centre for preventing violence).

54. Designated safeguarding leads can find further guidance on referrals and when to contact the police in Annex B (Manage Referrals).

Additional information and support

55. 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 that advice and will be particularly helpful for school and college staff. The [NSPCC](#) website also provides useful additional information on abuse and neglect and what to look out for.

56. **Annex A contains important additional information about specific forms of abuse, exploitation, and safeguarding issues. School and college leaders and those staff who work directly with children should read Annex A.**

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

57. Staff 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 should always act in the **best interests** of the child.
58. If staff have **any concerns** about a child’s welfare, they should act on them **immediately**. See page 27 for a flowchart setting out the process for staff when they have concerns about a child.
59. If staff have a concern, they should follow their own organisation’s child protection policy and speak to the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy).
60. Options will then include:
- managing any support for the child internally via the school or college’s own pastoral support processes, including considering where doing so does not place the child at additional risk, whether the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) should inform parents or carers to further support the child’s wellbeing,
 - undertaking a Family Help assessment,¹⁵ or
 - making a referral to statutory services,¹⁶ for example as the child could be in need, is in need or is suffering, or likely to suffer harm.
61. The designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) should always be available to discuss safeguarding concerns. If in exceptional circumstances, the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) is not available, this should not delay appropriate action being taken. Staff should consider speaking to a member of the senior leadership team and/or take advice from local authority children’s social care. In these circumstances, any action taken should be shared with the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) as soon as is practically possible.
62. Staff should not assume a colleague or another professional will take action and share information that might be critical in keeping children safe. They should be mindful that early information sharing is vital for the effective identification, assessment, and allocation of appropriate service provision, whether this is when problems first emerge, or where a child is already known to

¹⁵ Further information on Family Help assessments, provision of Family Help services and accessing services is in [Working Together to Safeguard Children](#).

¹⁶ [Working Together to Safeguard Children](#) sets out that the safeguarding partners should publish a threshold document that should include 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 17 and 47. Local authorities, with their partners, should develop and publish local protocols for assessment. A local protocol should set out clear arrangements for how cases will be managed once a child is referred into local authority children’s social care.

local authority children's social care (such as a child in need or a child with a protection plan). [Information sharing: advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services to children, young people, parents and carers](#) supports staff who have to make decisions about sharing information.

63. **Data protection laws do not prevent the sharing of information for the purposes of keeping children safe and promoting their welfare.** If in any doubt about sharing information, staff should speak to the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy). Fears about sharing information **must not** be allowed to stand in the way of the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

Community-based Early Help assessment

64. If children do not require the support of statutory children's services, the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) will generally lead the liaison with other agencies and setting up an inter-agency assessment as appropriate. Staff may be required to support other agencies and professionals in carrying out this assessment, in some cases acting as the lead practitioner. Further guidance on effective assessment of the need for Family Help can be found in [Working Together to Safeguard Children](#). Any such cases should be kept under constant review and consideration given to a referral to local authority children's social care for assessment for statutory services if the child's situation does not appear to be improving or is getting worse. Alternatively, qualified lead practitioners (i.e. not a social worker) who may lead assessments before statutory intervention can continue to lead work with families up to and including section 17.

Statutory children's social care assessments and services

65. **Where a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer from harm, it is important that a referral to local authority children's social care and if appropriate the police,** (see [when to call the police: guidance for schools and colleges \(npcc.police.uk\)](#)) **is made immediately.** Referrals should follow the local referral process.

66. Local authority children's social care assessments should consider where children are being harmed in contexts outside of the home¹⁷, so it is important that schools and colleges provide as much information as possible as part of the referral process. This will allow any assessment to consider all the available evidence and enable a contextual approach to address such harm. Additional information is available here: [Contextual Safeguarding](#).

¹⁷ See [Working Together to Safeguard Children](#) for further information about extra-familial harms and environments outside the family home.

67. The online tool [Report child abuse to your local council](#) directs to the relevant local authority children's social care contact details.

Children in need

68. A child in need is defined under 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. Local authorities are required to provide services for children in need for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting their welfare. Children in need may be assessed under [section 17 of the Children Act 1989](#). As outlined in [Working Together to Safeguard Children](#), local authorities, with their safeguarding partners and any relevant agencies, should develop, agree and publish local protocols for assessments and support. This should set out who can act as lead practitioner in supporting children and their families under section 17 (which is not limited to social workers).

Children suffering or likely to suffer significant harm

69. Local authorities, with the help of other organisations as appropriate, 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. Such enquiries enable them to decide whether they should take any action to safeguard and promote the child's welfare and must be initiated where there are concerns about maltreatment. This includes all forms of abuse, neglect and exploitation.

What will the local authority do?

70. Within one working day of a referral being made, a local authority social worker should acknowledge its receipt to the referrer and make a decision about the next steps and the type of response that is required. This will include determining whether:

- the child requires immediate protection and urgent action is required,
- any services are required by the child and family and what type of services,
- the child is in need and should be assessed under section 17 of the Children Act 1989. [Working Together to Safeguard Children](#) provides details of the assessment process,
- there is reasonable cause to suspect the child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm, and whether enquiries must be made, and the child assessed under section 47 of the Children Act 1989. [Working Together to Safeguard Children](#) provides details of the assessment process, and

- further specialist assessments are required to help the local authority to decide what further action to take.

71. The referrer should follow up if this information is not forthcoming.

72. If social workers decide to carry out a statutory assessment, staff should do everything they can to support that assessment, supported by the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) as required.

73. If, after a referral, the child's situation does not appear to be improving, the referrer should consider following local escalation procedures to ensure their concerns have been addressed and, most importantly, that the child's situation improves.

Record keeping

74. All concerns, discussions and decisions made, and the reasons for those decisions, should be recorded in writing. This will also help if/when responding to any complaints about the way a case has been handled by the school or college. Information should be kept confidential and stored securely. It is good practice to keep concerns and referrals in a separate child protection file for each child.

Records **should** 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.

75. If in doubt about recording requirements, staff should discuss with the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy).

Why is all of this important?

76. It is important for children to receive the right help at the right time to address safeguarding risks, prevent issues escalating and to promote children's welfare. Research and local child safeguarding practice reviews have repeatedly shown the dangers of failing to take effective action.¹⁸ Further information about local child safeguarding practice can be found in [Working Together to Safeguard Children](#).

Examples of poor practice include:

¹⁸ An analysis of serious case reviews can be found at gov.uk/government/publications/serious-case-reviews-analysis-lessons-and-challenges

- 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 not improve,
- not sharing information with the right people within and between agencies,
- sharing information too slowly, and
- a lack of challenge to those who appear not to be taking action.

What school and college staff should do if they have a safeguarding concern or an allegation about another staff member

77. Schools and colleges should have processes and procedures in place to manage any safeguarding concern or allegation (no matter how small) about staff members (including supply staff, trainee teachers, volunteers, and contractors).

78. If staff have a safeguarding concern or an allegation of harming or posing a risk of harm to children is made about another member of staff (including supply staff, trainee teachers, volunteers, and contractors), then:

- this should be referred to the headteacher or principal, who will consider whether an onward referral to the LADO is required,
- where there is a concern/allegation about the headteacher or principal, this should be referred to the chair of governors, chair of the management committee or proprietor of an independent school, and
- in the event of a concern/allegation about the headteacher, where the headteacher is also the sole proprietor of an independent school, or a situation where there is a conflict of interest in reporting the matter to the headteacher, this should be reported directly to the LADO(s). Details of your local LADO should be easily accessible on your local authority's website.

79. If staff have a safeguarding concern or an allegation about another member of staff (including supply staff, trainee teachers, volunteers or contractors) that does not meet the harm threshold, then this should be shared in accordance with the school or college's low-level concerns policy. Further details can be found in Part four of this guidance.

What school or college staff should do if they have concerns about safeguarding practices within the school or college

80. 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 provision and know that such concerns will be taken seriously by the senior leadership team.

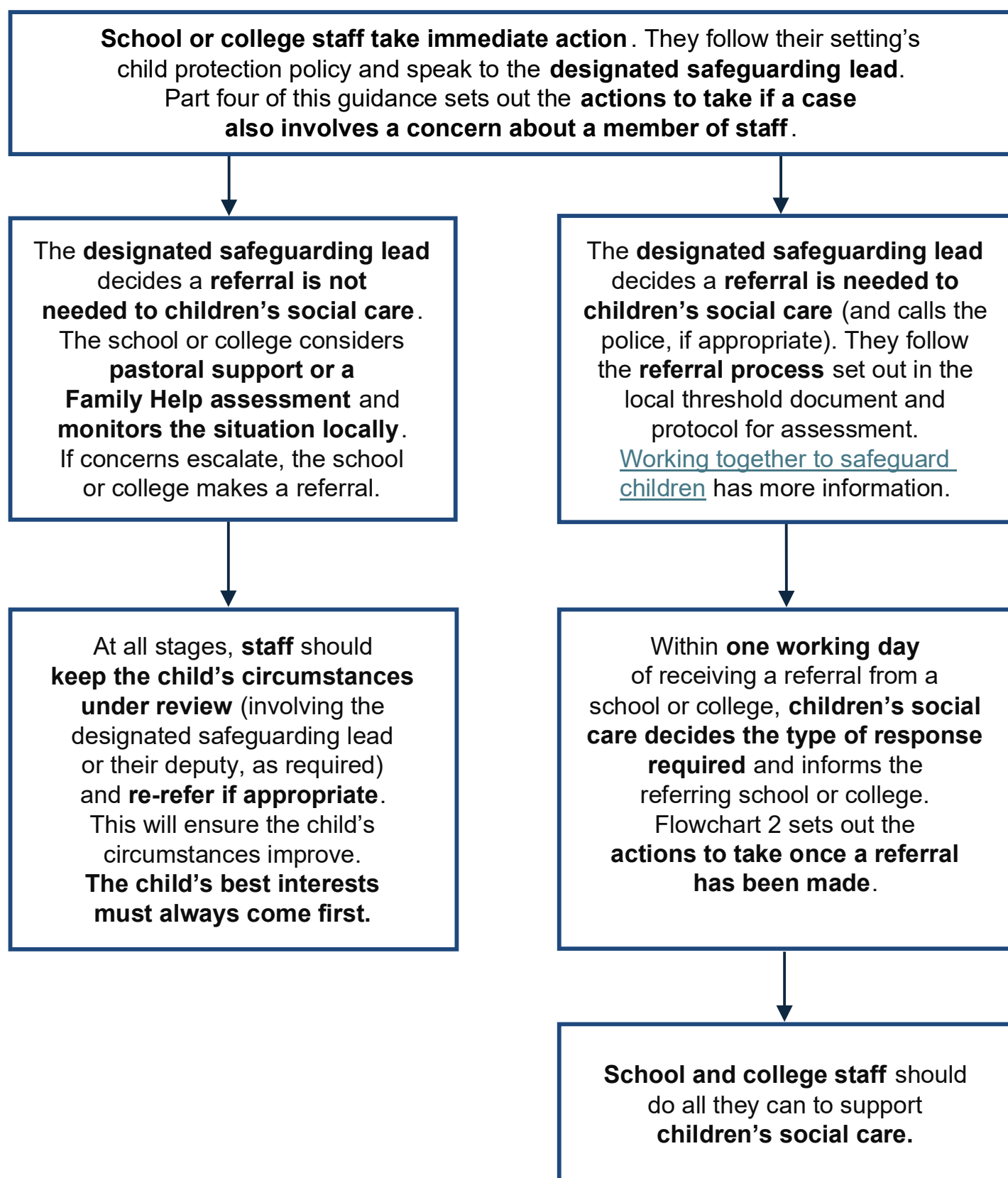
81. Appropriate whistleblowing procedures should be put in place for such concerns to be raised with the school or college's senior leadership team.

82. 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:

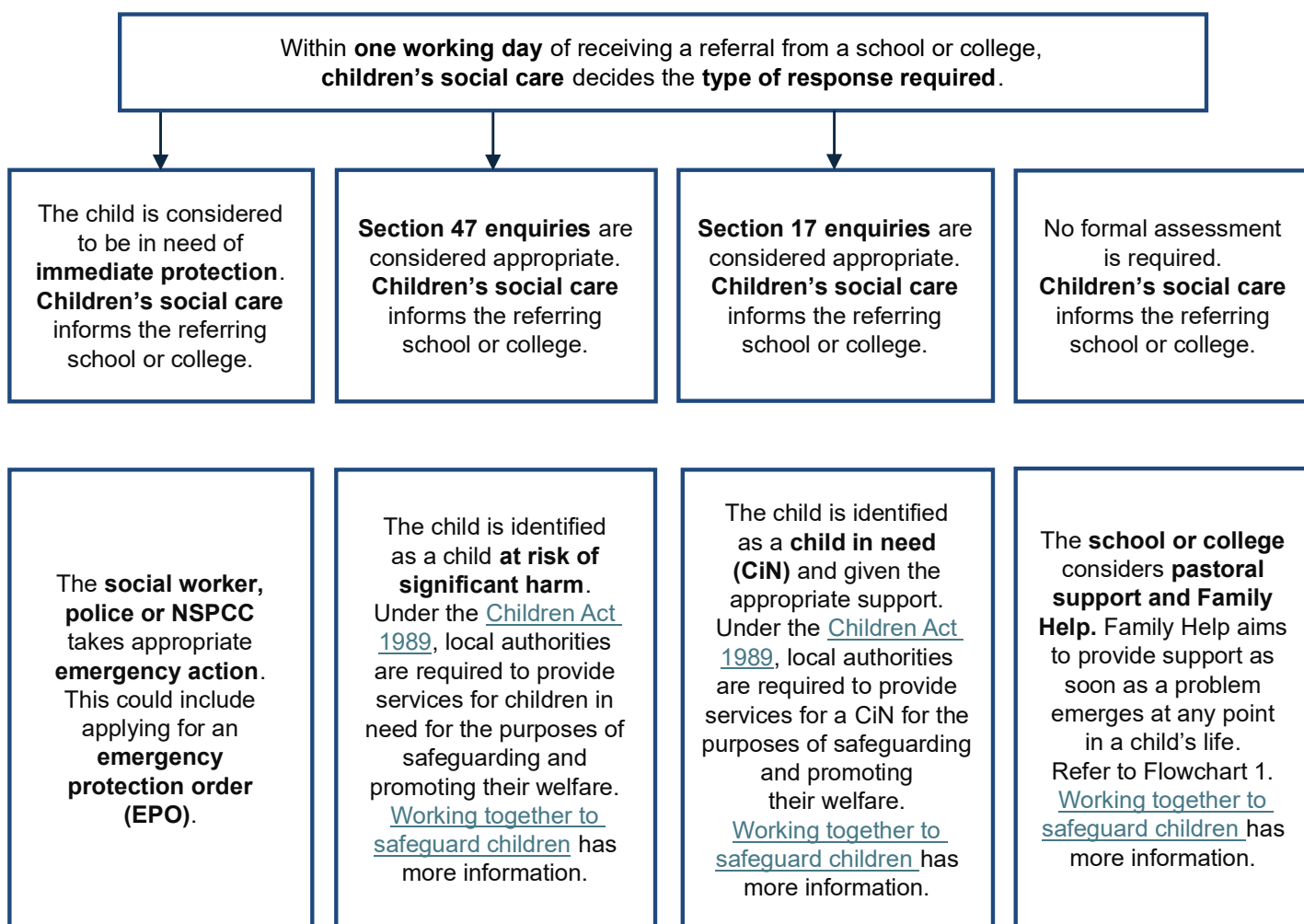
- general advice on whistleblowing can be found at [whistleblowing for employees](#), and
- the [NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line](#) is available as an alternative route for staff who do not feel able to raise concerns regarding child protection failures internally or have concerns about the way a concern 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.uk¹⁹

¹⁹ Alternatively, staff can write to: National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC), Weston House, 42 Curtain, Road, London EC2A 3NH.

Flowchart 1: actions taken by a school or college when there are concerns about a child



Flowchart 2: actions taken once a referral has been made to children's social care



Part two: The management of safeguarding

83. This part of the guidance sets out the responsibility of governing bodies, proprietors and management committees.

Legislation and the law

84. Governing bodies and proprietors²⁰ have a strategic leadership responsibility for their school or college's safeguarding arrangements and must ensure that they comply with their duties under legislation. They must have regard to this guidance, ensuring policies, procedures and training in their schools or colleges are effective and comply with the law at all times.²¹ Headteachers and principals should ensure that the policies and procedures, adopted by their governing bodies and proprietors (particularly those concerning referrals of cases of suspected abuse and neglect), are understood, and followed by all staff.

85. Where a school or college has charitable status, Charity Commission guidance on charity and trustee duties to safeguard children is available at [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).

86. Governing bodies and proprietors should have a senior board level (or equivalent) lead to take leadership responsibility for their school or college's safeguarding arrangements.

87. Governing bodies and proprietors should ensure that all governors and trustees receive appropriate safeguarding and child protection (including online) training at induction. This training should equip them with the knowledge to

²⁰ In the case of academies, free schools and alternative provision academies the proprietor will be the academy trust.

²¹ [Section 175 of the Education Act 2002](#) requires governing bodies of maintained schools and colleges, in relation to their functions relating to the conduct of the school or the institution to make arrangements for ensuring that such functions are exercised with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children who are either pupils at the school or are receiving education or training at the institution. [The Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#) apply a duty to proprietors of independent schools (which in the case of academies and free schools is the academy trust) to ensure that arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. [The Non-Maintained Special Schools \(England\) Regulations 2015](#) oblige non-maintained special schools to comply with certain requirements as a condition of their approval and whilst approved by the Secretary of State. One condition of approval is that the proprietor must make arrangements for safeguarding and promoting the health, safety and welfare of pupils, which have regard to any guidance including where appropriate, [the National Minimum Standards](#), about safeguarding and promoting the health, safety and welfare of pupils and, in the case of schools already approved, that these arrangements at the school with respect to these matters are in accordance with the approval given by the Secretary of State. [The Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009](#) (as amended) requires 16-19 Academies, Special Post-16 institutions and Independent Training Providers to make arrangements to ensure that the proprietor's functions relating to the conduct of the institution are exercised with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children receiving education or training at the institution. For colleges, non-maintained special schools and independent schools: the definition of 'children' applies to the statutory responsibilities for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children i.e. those under 18.

provide strategic challenge, to test and assure themselves that the safeguarding policies and procedures in place in schools and colleges are effective, and support the delivery of a robust, whole school approach to safeguarding. Their training should be updated regularly.

88. Governing bodies and proprietors should be aware of their obligations under the Human Rights Act 1998²², the Equality Act 2010²³, (including the Public Sector Equality Duty²⁴), and their local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements.²⁵

Human Rights Act 1998

89. The Human Rights Act 1998 (HRA) sets out the fundamental rights and freedoms that everyone in the UK is entitled to and contains the Articles and protocols of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) (the Convention) that are deemed to apply in the UK. It compels public organisations to respect and protect an individual's human rights when they make individual decisions about them.

90. Under the HRA, 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: all of the rights and freedoms set out in the Act must be protected and applied without discrimination²⁶, and
- Protocol 1, Article 2: protects the right to education.

91. 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. Further information (including on absolute and qualified rights) can be found at [Equality and Human Rights Commission](#)

²² [Human Rights Act 1998 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)

²³ [Equality Act 2010 Advice for schools](#)

²⁴ The Public Sector Equality Duty is a legal requirement for schools and colleges that are public bodies. [Public Sector Equality Duty \(advice for schools\)](#)

²⁵ See paragraphs 132-139 on multi-agency working.

²⁶ As a matter of law, Article 14 only applies where the act complained of falls within the ambit of another Convention right, but in this context, it should always be assumed that either through Article 8 or Article 2 of Protocol 1, or both, Article 14 will be engaged.

Equality Act 2010

92. Schools and colleges have obligations under the Equality Act 2010 (the Equality Act).
93. According to the Equality Act schools and colleges must not unlawfully discriminate against pupils, students or staff because of their sex, race, disability, religion or belief, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, or sexual orientation (protected characteristics).
94. Whilst all of the above protections are important in the context of safeguarding, this guidance 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 protected characteristics - including disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment and race.
95. Provisions within the Equality Act allow schools and colleges to take positive action, where it can be shown that it is proportionate to deal with particular disadvantages affecting pupils or students with certain protected characteristics, in order to meet their specific need. A school or college, could, for example, consider taking positive action to support girls if there is evidence that they are being disproportionately subjected to sexual violence or sexual harassment, including online. There is also a duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled children and young people.
96. 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.GOV.UK](http://EqualityAct2010.adviceforschools.GOV.UK) it may also be useful for colleges. For further information see [Guidance: EHRC \(equalityhumanrights.com\)](http://Guidance:EHRC(equalityhumanrights.com)).

Sport

97. This section applies to schools, institutions within the “further education sector” as defined by the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 and 16-19 academies, all of which are covered by part 6 of the Equality Act 2010. This section does not apply to colleges that are not 16-19 academies and are outside the “further education sector” as defined by the Further and Higher Education Act 1992. These colleges may be covered by part 3 or 5 of the Equality Act 2010 and they should take independent legal advice on compliance, taking into account their safeguarding obligations towards children and the importance of ensuring sport is safe and fair.
98. As children get older, some sports are typically taught and played in single-

sex groups.²⁷ The Equality Act 2010 contains an exception in relation to single-sex sport. It applies to participation in any sport or game, or activity of a competitive nature, where the physical strength, stamina or physique of the average girl would put her at a disadvantage in competition with the average boy (or vice versa). This means that schools and colleges can separate children according to their biological

sex in these circumstances without discriminating unlawfully against them on the basis of their sex.

99. Some sports may need to be played in single-sex groups from a certain age to ensure children's safety, and where this is the case there must be no exceptions. In other cases, schools or colleges may have adopted a policy of single-sex sports for reasons related to fairness.

100. Where there are no safety concerns and a child makes a request relating to how they participate, schools and colleges will need to consider the request in light of the advice on "considering requests for support with social transition". This means that the school or college would need to take into account all the relevant factors, including whether supporting social transition is overall in the best interests of the child, as well as considering the impact on other children and the aim of creating safe and fair environments for children to participate in PE.

Public Sector Equality Duty

101. The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) is found in the Equality Act. Compliance with the PSED is a legal requirement for state-funded schools and colleges.

102. The PSED places a general duty on schools and colleges to have, in the exercise of their functions, due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation (and any other conduct prohibited under the Equality Act), to advance 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 (see paragraphs 92-96) and means that whenever significant decisions are being made or policies developed, specific consideration must be given to the equality implications of these such as, for example, the need to eliminate unlawful behaviours that relate to them, such as sexual violence and sexual harassment, misogyny/misandry, racism and faith-based prejudice. This is one reason why good record-keeping and monitoring of all forms of abuse and harassment is essential.

²⁷ Schools should be informed by guidance from National Governing Bodies on safe and fair operation of individual sports.

103. The PSED helps schools and colleges focus on key issues of concern and improve pupil and student outcomes. Some pupils or students may be more at risk of harm or bullying from specific issues such as sexual violence, homophobic, biphobic or transphobic bullying or faith- or race-based discrimination. These concerns will vary between education settings, but it is important that schools and colleges remain aware of disproportionate vulnerabilities and integrate this awareness into their safeguarding policies, procedures and guidance. For further information please see [Technical Guidance on the Public Sector Equality Duty: England](#).

Data Protection Act 2018, the UK GDPR and the Data (Use and Access) Act 2025 – ‘data protection laws’

104. Throughout this guidance, the term ‘data protection laws’ refers collectively to the Data Protection Act 2018, the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR), and the Data (Use and Access) Act 2025.

105. It is important that governing bodies and proprietors are aware that among other obligations, the data protection laws place duties on organisations and individuals to process personal information fairly and lawfully and to keep the information they hold safe and secure. See ICO guidance ‘[For Organisations](#)’ which includes information about your obligations and how to comply, including protecting personal information, and providing access to official information.

106. In addition, see 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.

Regulations and safeguarding requirements relating to school premises

Toilets

107. This section applies to schools, institutions within the “further education sector” as defined by the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 and 16-19 academies, all of which are covered by part 6 of the Equality Act 2010. This section does not apply to colleges that are not 16-19 academies and are outside the “further education sector” as defined by the Further and Higher Education Act 1992. These colleges may be covered by part 3 or 5 of the Equality Act 2010 and they should take independent legal advice on compliance, taking into account their safeguarding obligations and ensuring the provision of appropriate facilities for girls

and boys that do not compromise their safety, comfort, privacy or dignity.

108. Schools must not allow children into toilets designated for the opposite biological sex. This includes where schools are responding to a request to support any degree of social transition for children who are questioning their gender.

109. Schools must provide separate toilets for boys and girls aged 8 and over (apart from where individual toilets are in a room that can be locked from the inside, intended for use by one pupil at a time). This is required by the School Premises (England) Regulations 2012 and the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 which apply to both maintained schools, academies and independent schools and reflects schools' safeguarding obligations.

110. While colleges to whom this section applies are not subject to the same legal requirements, they should take the same approach as is taken in schools given that the same safeguarding considerations apply.

111. Therefore, if a gender-questioning child does not want to use the toilet designated for their biological sex, schools and colleges should consider whether they can provide an alternative toilet facility, for example self-contained individual toilets, without compromising the provision of single-sex facilities. These alternative arrangements should not compromise the safety, comfort, privacy or dignity of the child, or of any other children.

112. It is important that schools and colleges keep a clear record of these situations, ensure they are communicated appropriately, and review them regularly.

113. Where a school or college provides mixed-sex toilets in addition to single-sex toilets, schools and colleges should assess safeguarding risks and plan accordingly, for example, mixed-sex toilets should be in individual, lockable rooms and open directly onto public areas (e.g. a corridor).

Changing Rooms and Showers

114. This section applies to schools, institutions within the "further education sector" as defined by the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 and 16-19 academies, all of which are covered by part 6 of the Equality Act 2010. This section does not apply to colleges that are not 16-19 academies and are outside the "further education sector" as defined by the Further and Higher Education Act 1992. These colleges may be covered by part 3 or 5 of the Equality Act 2010 and they should take independent legal advice on compliance, taking into account their safeguarding obligations towards children and ensuring the provision of appropriate facilities for girls and boys that do not compromise their safety, comfort, privacy or dignity.

115. Schools must not allow a child, aged 11 years or older at the start of the school year, to undress in front of a child of the opposite biological sex. This is required by the School Premises (England) Regulations 2012 and the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, which require maintained schools, academies and independent schools to provide suitable changing accommodation and showers for pupils who are aged 11 years or over at the start of the school year. This means that the changing accommodation and showers must be suitable for the pupils they are provided for, having regard to their ages, numbers, and sex and any special requirements they may have and is informed by the school's safeguarding obligations. When responding to a request to support any degree of social transition, a school must not allow a child access to changing rooms designated for the opposite sex.

116. While colleges to whom this section applies are not subject to the same legal requirements, they should take the same approach as is taken in schools given that the same safeguarding considerations apply.

117. If a gender-questioning child does not want to use the changing rooms and showers designated for their sex, schools and colleges should consider whether they can provide an alternative changing or washing facility without compromising the provision of single-sex facilities. This could be a fully enclosed room – for use by one child at a time that can be secured from the inside – or by allowing access to facilities at an alternative time. These alternative arrangements should not compromise the safety, comfort, privacy or dignity of the child or of any other children.

118. It is important that schools and colleges keep a clear record of these situations, ensure they are communicated appropriately, and review them regularly.

Whole school and college approach to safeguarding

119. Governing bodies and proprietors should ensure they facilitate a whole school or college approach to safeguarding. This means involving everyone in the school or college and ensuring that safeguarding and child protection are at the forefront and underpin all relevant aspects of process and policy development. Schools and colleges should promote an inclusive, anti-discriminatory culture where racism, and other forms of discriminatory behaviour are recognised, challenged and addressed as part of their safeguarding responsibilities. Ultimately, all systems, processes and policies should operate with the best interests of the child at their heart.

120. Where there is a safeguarding concern, governing bodies, proprietors and

school or college leaders should ensure the child's wishes and feelings are taken into account when determining what action to take and what services to provide.

121. The school or college's safeguarding policies and procedures (some of which are listed below) should be transparent, clear, and easy to understand for staff, pupils, students, parents, and carers. Systems should be in place, and they should be well promoted, easily understood and easily accessible for children to confidently report, any form of abuse or neglect, knowing their concerns will be treated seriously, and knowing they can safely express their views and give feedback.

Safeguarding policies and procedures

122. Governing bodies and proprietors should ensure there are appropriate policies and procedures in place in order for appropriate action to be taken in a timely manner to safeguard and promote children's welfare.

123. These policies should include individual schools and colleges having:

- an **effective child protection policy** which:
 - reflects the whole school/college approach to child-on-child abuse (see paragraphs 192-193 and Part five),
 - reflects reporting systems as set out at paragraph 121,
 - describes procedures which are in accordance with government guidance,
 - refers to locally agreed multi-agency safeguarding arrangements put in place by the safeguarding partners (see paragraphs 132-139),
 - includes policies as reflected elsewhere in Part two of this guidance, such as online safety (see paragraphs 164-169), and special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) (see paragraphs 249-251),
 - is reviewed annually (as a minimum) and updated if needed, so that it is kept up to date with safeguarding issues as they emerge and evolve, including lessons learnt, and
 - is available publicly either via the school or college website or by other means.
- a **behaviour policy**²⁸, which includes measures to prevent bullying (including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying)

²⁸ All schools are required to have a behaviour policy (full details are [here](#)). If a college chooses to have a behaviour policy, it should be provided to staff at induction as described above.

- a **staff behaviour policy**²⁹ (sometimes called the code of conduct) which should, amongst other things, include low-level concerns, allegations against staff and whistleblowing, plus acceptable use of technologies (including the use of mobile devices), staff/pupil relationships and communications including the use of social media, and
- **appropriate safeguarding arrangements** in place to respond to children who are absent from education, particularly on repeat occasions and/or for prolonged periods. (More information is provided at paragraph 221).

124. The above is not intended to be an exhaustive list. These policies and procedures, along with Part one of this guidance and information regarding the role and identity of the designated safeguarding lead (and deputies), should be provided to all staff on induction.

125. Governing bodies and proprietors should take a proportionate risk-based approach to the level of information that is provided to temporary staff, volunteers and contractors.

126. In addition, governing bodies and proprietors should ensure:

- **child protection files** are maintained as set out in Annex B,
- **appropriate safer recruitment policies** in accordance with Part three of this guidance are in place, embedded and effective and,
- where reasonably possible, schools and colleges hold **more than one emergency contact number** for each pupil or student. This goes beyond the legal minimum.³⁰ It is good practice to give the school or college additional options to make contact with a responsible adult when a child missing education is also identified as a welfare and/or safeguarding concern. Further information for schools can be found in the department's statutory guidance '[Working together to improve school attendance](#)'.

The designated safeguarding lead

127. Governing bodies and proprietors should ensure an appropriate senior member of staff, from the school or college leadership team, is appointed to the

²⁹ When drafting the staff behaviour policy, schools and colleges should bear in mind the offence under section 16 of The Sexual Offences Act 2003, which provides that it is an offence for a person aged 18 or over (e.g. teacher, youth worker) to have a sexual relationship with a child under 18 where that person is in a position of trust in respect of that child, even if the relationship is consensual. A situation where a person is in a position of trust could arise where the child is in full-time education and the person looks after children under 18 in the same establishment as the child, even if they do not teach the child.

³⁰ See [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#)

role of designated safeguarding lead.³¹ It is not appropriate for the proprietor to be the designated safeguarding lead. The designated safeguarding lead should take lead responsibility for safeguarding and child protection (including online safety and understanding the filtering and monitoring systems and processes in place). This should be explicit in the role holder's job description.

128. Governing bodies and proprietors should ensure the designated safeguarding lead has the appropriate status, authority, skills and experience within the school or college to carry out the duties of the post. The role carries a significant level of responsibility and the postholder should be given the additional time, funding, training, resources, and support needed to carry out the role effectively.

129. To ensure continuity of safeguarding responsibilities, schools should implement robust cover arrangements for periods when the designated safeguarding lead 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.

130. It is for individual schools and colleges to decide whether they choose to have one or more deputy designated safeguarding leads. Any deputy (or deputies) should be trained to the same standard as the designated safeguarding lead.

131. See Annex B, which describes the broad areas of responsibility and activities related to the role.

Multi-agency working

132. Schools and colleges have a pivotal role to play in multi-agency safeguarding arrangements. Governing bodies and proprietors should ensure that the school or college contributes to multi-agency working in line with statutory guidance [Working Together to Safeguard Children](#).

133. Safeguarding partners (the local authority; Integrated Care Boards (previously known as clinical commissioning group) for an area within the local

³¹ When a school has a sole proprietor rather than a governing body, appropriate steps should be taken to ensure that the member of the senior leadership team who is appointed as designated safeguarding lead (DSL) is able to discharge that role with sufficient independence, particularly in relation to any allegations involving the proprietor or members of the proprietor's family. This may involve including in the appointment as DSL, written confirmation that part of the duties of the post involve contacting the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) on any matter that the DSL considers cannot be properly dealt with internally. Consideration could also be given to providing the DSL with access to external advice from an appropriate company or legal service.

authority; and the chief officer of police for an area any part of which falls within the local authority area) will make arrangements to work together with appropriate relevant agencies to safeguard and promote the welfare of local children, including identifying and responding to their needs.

134. Safeguarding partners have a shared and equal duty to work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. To fulfil this role, they must set out how they will work together and with any relevant agencies.³² Relevant agencies are those organisations and agencies whose involvement the safeguarding partners consider may be required to safeguard and promote the welfare of children with regard to local need.

135. [Working Together to Safeguard Children](#) is very clear that all schools (including those in multi-academy trusts) and colleges in the local area should be fully engaged, involved, and included in safeguarding arrangements. It is expected that, locally, the safeguarding partners will name schools and colleges as relevant agencies. Safeguarding partners will set out in their published arrangements which organisations and agencies they will be working with, and the expectations placed on any agencies and organisations by the arrangements. Once named as a relevant agency, schools and colleges, in the same way as other relevant agencies, are under a statutory duty to co-operate with the published arrangements. They must act in accordance with the safeguarding arrangements.

136. It is especially important that schools and colleges understand their role within the local safeguarding arrangements. Governing bodies, proprietors, and their senior leadership teams, especially their designated safeguarding leads and deputies, should make themselves aware of and follow their local arrangements.

137. Governing bodies and proprietors should understand the local criteria for action³³ and the local protocol for assessment³⁴ and ensure they are reflected in their own policies and procedures. They should also be prepared to supply information as requested by the safeguarding partners.³⁵

³² For the list of relevant agencies see [The Child Safeguarding Practice Review and Relevant Agency \(England\) Regulations 2018](#). Schools and colleges are included.

³³ The safeguarding partners should publish a document which sets out the local criteria for action in a way that is transparent, accessible and easily understood. This should include: the process for the family help assessment and the type and level of family help services to be provided; the criteria, included 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 17, 20, 31 and 47 of [the Children Act 1989](#); and clear procedures and processes for cases relating to the exploitation of children, children managed within the youth secure estate and disabled children.

³⁴ The local authority, with their partners should develop and publish local protocols for assessment. Protocols should set out clear arrangements for how cases will be managed once a referral is made to local authority children's social care.

³⁵ More details on information requests by the safeguarding partners is provided in [Working Together to Safeguard Children](#).

138. Schools and colleges should work with local authority children's social care, the police, health services and other services to promote the welfare of children and protect them from harm. This includes providing a coordinated offer of family help when additional needs of children are identified and contributing to inter-agency plans to provide additional support to children subject to child protection plans.

139. All schools and colleges should allow access for local authority children's social care from the host local authority and, where appropriate, from a placing local authority, for that authority to conduct, or to consider whether to conduct, a section 17 or a section 47 assessment.

Information sharing

140. Information sharing is vital in identifying and tackling all forms of abuse, neglect, and exploitation, and in promoting children's welfare, including in relation to their educational outcomes. Schools and colleges have clear powers to share, hold and use information for these purposes.

141. As part of meeting a child's needs, it is important for governing bodies and proprietors to recognise the importance of information sharing between practitioners and local agencies. This should include ensuring arrangements are in place and understood that set out clearly the processes and principles for sharing information within the school or college and with local authority children's social care, the safeguarding partners and other organisations, agencies, and practitioners as required.

142. School and college staff should be proactive in sharing information as early as possible to help identify, assess and respond to risks or concerns about the safety and welfare of children, whether this is when problems are first emerging, or where a child is already known to local authority children's social care.

143. When deciding what information to share, schools and colleges should consider:

- the relevancy of the information, including to the current safeguarding risk,
- what is necessary for the receiving setting to know, and
- whether it is clearly presented and appropriately contextualised.

144. Professional judgement should be used to ensure that the information shared is focused and proportionate. This may include summarising or omitting information which is not necessary for safeguarding purposes. But care should be

taken not to omit information where it may be relevant to understanding or managing safeguarding risk. This is further supported by the new information sharing duty, which is intended to give staff greater confidence to share information appropriately and in a timely way to safeguard children. Following consultation, a final draft of the statutory guidance on the Information Sharing Duty will be published shortly.

145. It is important that governing bodies and proprietors are aware that among other obligations, the data protection laws place duties on organisations and individuals to process personal information fairly and lawfully and to keep the information they hold safe and secure.

146. Governing bodies and proprietors should ensure relevant staff have due regard to the relevant data protection principles, which allow them to share (and withhold) personal information, as provided for in the data protection laws.

This includes:

- being confident of the processing conditions which allow them to store and share information for safeguarding purposes, including information, which is sensitive and personal, and should be treated as ‘special category personal data’,
- understanding that ‘safeguarding of children and individuals at risk’ is a processing condition that allows, where appropriate, practitioners to share special category personal data without the need for consent.³⁶ and
- for schools, not providing pupils’ personal data in response to a Subject Access Request where the serious harm test under data protection legislation is met.³⁷ For example, in a situation where a child is in a refuge or another form of emergency accommodation, and the serious harm test is met, they must withhold providing the data in compliance with schools’ obligations under the data protection laws. Where in doubt schools should seek independent legal advice.

147. The data protection laws do not prevent the sharing of information for the purposes of keeping children safe.

148. Fears about sharing information must not be allowed to stand in the way of the need to safeguard and promote the welfare and protect the safety of children.

149. Further details on information sharing can be found:

³⁶ Practitioners should be aware that data protection legislation contains provisions which can permit the sharing of special category personal data for safeguarding purposes without consent and that some information is subject to an obligation of confidentiality. Practitioners should consider the legal basis for sharing information and ensure any information sharing is carried out in accordance with data protection legislation. If they are unsure, they should seek advice from a manager, data protection officer or information governance lead. Upcoming statutory guidance covers this in more detail.

³⁷ The harm test is explained on the Disclosure and Barring service website on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk). Section 31(9) of the Children Act 1989 as amended by the Adoption and Children Act 2002, available at legislation.gov.uk

- in [Working Together to Safeguard Children](#), which includes a myth-busting guide to information sharing,
- at [Information Sharing: Advice for Practitioners Providing Safeguarding Services to Children, Young People, Parents and Carers](#),
- the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) [guide to sharing information to safeguard children and young people in the education sector in the UK](#) which is intended to help practitioners to feel confident to share personal information for safeguarding purposes, and
- in [Data protection: toolkit for schools](#) - Guidance to support schools with data protection activity, including compliance with the UK GDPR.

150. Where children leave the school or college, the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) 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 to allow the new school or college to have support in place for when the child arrives. The designated safeguarding lead should ensure secure transit, and confirmation of receipt should be obtained. For schools, this should be transferred separately from the main pupil file. Receiving schools and colleges should ensure key staff such as designated safeguarding leads and special educational needs coordinators (SENCOs) or the named persons with oversight for special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) in a college, are aware as required. It will then be for the designated safeguarding lead to consider what other information should be shared with other relevant staff and when appropriate to do so.

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

152. Where information indicates a risk to others and/or the individual pupil, for example where a pupil has previously carried, threatened with, or used a knife or weapon, it is incumbent on the receiving school to assess risk, and accordingly, put in place a safety and support plan for when the child arrives. More information on the child protection file is in Annex B. It would be good practice for a conversation

to take place between the designated safeguarding leads at both settings, where there are issues or concerns.

Staff training

153. Governing bodies and proprietors should ensure that all staff undergo safeguarding and child protection training (including online safety which, amongst other things, includes an understanding of the expectations, applicable roles and responsibilities in relation to filtering and monitoring – see paragraphs 173-177 for further information) at induction. The training should be regularly updated. Induction and training should be in line with any advice from local safeguarding partners.

154. In addition, all staff should receive regular safeguarding and child protection updates, including online safety (for example, via email, e-bulletins, staff meetings) as required, and at least annually, to continue to provide them with relevant skills and knowledge to safeguard children effectively.

155. Governing bodies and proprietors should recognise the expertise staff build by undertaking safeguarding training, and from managing safeguarding concerns on a daily basis. Opportunity should therefore be provided for staff to contribute to and shape safeguarding arrangements and the child protection policy.

156. Governing bodies and proprietors should ensure that, as part of the requirement for staff to undergo regular updated safeguarding training, including in relation to online safety (paragraphs 164-169) and for children to be taught about safeguarding, including in relation to online safety (paragraphs 158-163), that safeguarding training for staff, including online safety training, is integrated, aligned and considered as part of the whole school or college safeguarding approach and wider staff training and curriculum planning.

157. Whilst considering the above training requirements, governing bodies and proprietors should have regard to the Teachers' Standards³⁸ which set out the expectation that all teachers manage behaviour effectively to ensure a good and safe educational environment and requires teachers to have a clear understanding of the needs of all pupils.

Opportunities to teach safeguarding

158. Governing bodies and proprietors should ensure that children are taught about how to keep themselves and others safe, including online. It should be recognised that effective education will be tailored to the specific needs and

³⁸ [Teachers' Standards.](#)

vulnerabilities of individual children, including children who are victims of abuse, and children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

159. In schools, relevant topics will be included within Relationships and Health Education (for all primary pupils), and Relationships, Sex and Health Education (for all secondary pupils). In teaching these subjects schools must have regard to the statutory guidance³⁹, which can be found [here](#) (revised for introduction September 2026). Colleges may cover relevant issues through tutorials.

160. Schools and colleges play a crucial role in preventative education. Preventative education 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, racism, misogyny/misandry, homophobia, biphobia, sexual violence/harassment, derogatory behaviour or other forms of physical violence and conflict. The school/college will have a clear set of values and standards, upheld and demonstrated throughout all aspects of school/college life. These will be underpinned by the school/college's behaviour policy and pastoral support system, as well as by a planned programme of evidence based RSHE delivered in regularly timetabled lessons and reinforced throughout the whole curriculum. Such a programme should be fully inclusive and developed to be age and stage of development appropriate (especially when considering the needs of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and other vulnerabilities). This programme will tackle, at an age-appropriate stage, issues such as:

- supporting children to develop the skills that form the building blocks of all positive relationships,
- healthy and respectful relationships,
- boundaries, consent and kindness in relationships,
- stereotyping, prejudice and equality,
- body confidence and self-esteem,
- how to recognise and report concerns about an abusive relationship, including coercive and controlling behaviour,
- the concepts of, and laws relating to all forms of sexual harassment, and abuse, and how to access support,
- what constitutes sexual harassment and sexual violence and why these are always unacceptable, emphasising that it is never the fault of the person

³⁹ With the exception that the regulations and guidance in relation to Health Education do not apply to independent schools that are not academies – separate regulations apply).

experiencing it, and

- understanding online harms such as sharing images, the prevalence of deepfakes, pornography and misogynistic influencers and when and where to seek help.

161. The department has produced a one-stop hub for teachers which can be accessed here: [Teaching about relationships, sex and health – GOV.UK](#). This includes teacher training modules on the RSHE topics and non-statutory implementation guidance.

162. The following resources may also help schools and colleges understand and teach about safeguarding:

- DfE advice for schools: [Teaching online safety in schools](#),
- The Oak National Academy have produced classroom resources to support teaching of the updated curriculum: [Free, time-saving teacher resources | Oak National Academy](#),
- UK Council for Internet Safety (UKCIS)⁴⁰ guidance: [Education for a connected world](#),
- UKCIS guidance: [Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people](#),
- The UKCIS [external visitors guidance](#) will help schools and colleges to ensure the maximum impact of any online safety sessions delivered by external visitors,
- National Crime Agency's [CEOP Education Programme](#): Protecting children and young people from online child sexual abuse through education. Including PSHE Association accredited [lesson plans and resources](#) aligned to the RSHE curriculum, regular e-bulletins on new and emerging threats and [training for professionals on online child sexual abuse](#),
- Public Health England⁴¹: [Every Mind Matters](#), and
- [Harmful online challenges and online hoaxes](#) - this includes advice on preparing for any online challenges and hoaxes, sharing information with parents and carers and where to get help and support.

163. Whilst it is essential that governing bodies and proprietors ensure that appropriate filtering and monitoring systems are in place, they should be careful that “over blocking” does not lead to unreasonable restrictions as to what children can be taught with regard to online teaching and safeguarding.

⁴⁰ UK Council for Internet Safety Education subgroup is made up of sector experts who collaborate to produce advice and guidance to support schools and colleges keep their children safe online.

⁴¹ Public Health England: has now been replaced by the UK Health Security Agency and the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID), which is part of the Department of Health and Social Care, and by the UK Health Security Agency, however branding remains unchanged.

Online safety

164. It is essential that children are safeguarded from potentially harmful and inappropriate online material. An effective whole school and college 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.

165. 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, racism, misogyny, self-harm, suicide, antisemitism, radicalisation, extremism, extreme sexual or physical violence, misinformation, disinformation (including fake news) and conspiracy theories,

contact: being subjected to harmful online interaction with other users or generative AI applications that simulate this; 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: online behaviour that increases the likelihood of, or causes, harm; for example, making, sending and receiving explicit images, including those generated using AI and online bullying, and

commerce: risks such as online gambling, inappropriate advertising, phishing and or financial scams. If you feel your pupils, students or staff are at risk, please report it to the Anti-Phishing Working Group (<https://apwg.org/>).

166. Governing bodies and proprietors should ensure online safety is a running and interrelated theme whilst devising and implementing their whole school or college approach to safeguarding and related 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 deputies) and any parental engagement.

167. Guidance to support schools and colleges to understand safety considerations and legal responsibilities if they choose to use Generative AI (either teacher-facing or pupil-facing) can be found at [Generative artificial intelligence in education](#).

168. To complement this, the department, in partnership with the Chiltern Learning Trust and Chartered College of Teaching, have published [online](#)

[resources](#) to help school and college staff to use AI safely and effectively. Module 3 provides important information on identifying and mitigating key risks associated with safeguarding, ethics, data protection, and intellectual property.

Online safety policy

169. Online safety and the school or college's approach to it should be reflected in the child protection policy which, amongst other things, should include appropriate filtering and monitoring on school devices and school networks. Considering the 4Cs (above) will provide the basis of an effective online policy.

Mobile phone policy

170. All schools should be mobile phone-free environments by default; anything other than this should be by exception only. Statutory guidance on [Mobile phones in schools](#) is clear that the department expects schools to implement a policy whereby pupils do not have access to their mobile phone throughout the school day including during lessons, the time between lessons, breaktimes and lunchtime. There are a number of ways in which schools can ensure that they are mobile phone-free, and it is for headteachers to decide how best to achieve this within their own unique contexts. Examples of how schools have become mobile free are available from [Creating a mobile phone-free environment: school case studies](#).

Remote education

171. Guidance to support schools and colleges understand how to help keep pupils, students and staff safe whilst learning remotely can be found at [Safeguarding and remote education - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#) and [Providing remote education: guidance for schools - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#).

172. Schools and colleges are likely to be in regular contact with parents and carers. These communications should be used to reinforce the importance of children being safe online and parents and carers are likely to find it helpful to understand what systems schools and colleges use to filter and monitor online use. It will be especially important for parents and carers to be aware of what their children are being asked to do online, including the sites they will be asked to access and be clear who from the school or college (if anyone) their child is going to be interacting with online.

Filtering and monitoring

173. Whilst considering their responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare

of children and provide them with a safe environment in which to learn, governing bodies and proprietors should be doing all that they reasonably can to limit children's exposure to the above risks from the school or college's IT system. As part of this process, governing bodies and proprietors should ensure their school or college has appropriate filtering and monitoring systems in place and ensure that a review of their effectiveness is carried out at least once every academic year. Reviews should be carried out by the SLT member responsible for filtering and monitoring, with the support of the school's designated safeguarding lead and IT support. They should include checks that filtering is working appropriately on all internet-connected devices in all relevant locations, and a record should be kept of these checks. They should ensure that the leadership team and relevant staff have an awareness and understanding of the provisions in place and manage them effectively and know how to escalate concerns when identified. Governing bodies and proprietors should consider the number of and age range of their children, those who are potentially at greater risk of harm and how often they access the IT system along with the proportionality of costs versus safeguarding risks.

174. The appropriateness of any filtering and monitoring systems are a matter for individual schools and colleges and will be informed in part, by the risk assessment required by the Prevent Duty.⁴²

175. The department's [filtering and monitoring standards](#) provide more detailed guidance. They set out that schools and colleges 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, and
- have effective monitoring strategies in place that meet their safeguarding needs.

176. Schools can use the department's '[Plan technology for your school service](#)' to self-assess against the filtering and monitoring standards and receive personalised recommendations on how to meet them.

177. Governing bodies and proprietors should review the standards and discuss with IT staff and service providers what more needs to be done to support schools and colleges in meeting this standard. Additional guidance on "appropriate" filtering and monitoring can be found at:

⁴² [The Prevent duty Departmental advice for schools and childcare providers](#) and Home Office [Statutory guidance: Prevent duty guidance](#).

- UK Safer Internet Centre: [A Guide for education settings and filtering providers](#). The UK Safer Internet Centre produced a series of webinars for teachers on behalf of the department. These webinars were designed to inform and support schools with their filtering and monitoring responsibilities and can be assessed at [Filtering and monitoring webinars available – UK Safer Internet Centre](#),
- South West Grid for Learning (swgfl.org.uk) has created a [tool](#) to check whether a school or college's filtering provider is signed up to relevant lists (CSA content, Sexual Content, Terrorist content, Your Internet Connection Blocks Child Abuse & Terrorist Content),
- Support for schools when considering what to buy and how to buy it is available via the: [Schools' buying strategy](#) with specific advice on procurement here: [Buying for schools](#), and
- The department has published [Generative AI: product safety expectations](#) to support schools to use generative artificial intelligence safely and explains how filtering and monitoring requirements apply to the use of generative AI in education.

Information security and access management

178. Governing bodies and proprietors should take measures to safeguard children by protecting personal information and ensuring their school or college has appropriate cyber security systems in place. This should be approached as part of the school or college's wider safeguarding responsibilities. As part of this, schools and colleges should consider implementing measures in line with the [Cyber security standards for schools and colleges](#).

179. The [Cyber security standards for schools and colleges](#) outline actions that schools and colleges should consider implementing to strengthen resilience, reduce the risk of disruption, prevent data breaches, and mitigate safeguarding risks.

180. Guidance on e-security is available from the [National Education Network](#), and broader cyber security advice, including resources for governors and trustees, can be found at [National Cyber Security Centre – NCSC](#). The department's '[plan technology for your school service](#)' supports schools in meeting digital standards through self-assessment and personalised recommendations.

Reviewing online safety

181. Technology, and risks and harms related to it, evolve, and change rapidly. Schools and colleges should consider carrying out an annual review of their

approach to online safety, supported by an annual risk assessment that considers and reflects the risks their children face. A free online safety self-review tool for schools can be found via the [360 safe website](#) or [LGfL online safety audit](#).

182. UKCIS has published [Online safety in schools and colleges: questions from the governing board](#). The questions can be used to gain a basic understanding of the current approach to keeping children safe online; learn how to improve this approach where appropriate; and find out about tools which can be used to improve the approach. It has also published an [Online Safety Audit Tool](#) which helps mentors of trainee teachers and newly qualified teachers induct mentees and provide ongoing support, development and monitoring.

183. When reviewing online safety provision, the UKCIS [external visitors guidance](#) highlights a range of resources which can support educational settings to develop a whole school approach towards online safety.

Further information and support

184. There is a wealth of additional information available to support schools, colleges and parents to keep children safe online. A sample is provided in Annex A.

Inspection

185. Ofsted's inspections of early years, schools and post-16 provision are carried out under: [Education inspection framework \(EIF\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#). Inspectors will always report on whether or not arrangements for safeguarding children and learners are effective.

186. In addition to the framework and inspections handbooks, the [Ofstednews YouTube channel](#) provides webinars on a range of topics that may help schools and colleges.

187. The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is approved to inspect certain independent schools and will also report on safeguarding arrangements. ISI has a published framework which informs how it inspects at [Independent Schools Inspectorate](#).

What school and college staff should do if they have a safeguarding concern or an allegation is made about another staff member

188. Governing bodies and proprietors should ensure there are procedures in

place as described in paragraphs 77-79, to manage any safeguarding concerns (no matter how small) or allegations that do not meet the harm threshold, about staff members (including supply staff, trainee teachers, volunteers, and contractors). 'Low-level' concerns should be addressed as set out in Section two of Part four of this guidance.

189. Governing bodies and proprietors should ensure there are procedures in place, as described in paragraphs 77-79, for staff to report concerns or allegations that may meet the harm threshold about staff members (including supply staff, trainee teachers, volunteers, and contractors). These should be addressed as set out in Section one of Part four of this guidance.

190. There must be procedures in place to make a referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) if a person in regulated activity has been dismissed or removed due to safeguarding concerns or would have been had they not resigned.⁴³ This is a legal duty and failure to refer when the criteria are met is a criminal offence.⁴⁴ More detail is provided at paragraphs 427-431.

191. Where a teacher's employer, including an agency, dismisses or ceases to use the services of a teacher because of serious misconduct, or might have dismissed them or ceased to use their services had they not left first, they must consider whether to refer the case to the Secretary of State (via the Teaching Regulation Agency). Details about how to make a referral to the Teaching Regulation Agency can be found on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).

Child-on-child abuse (including harassment and violence)

192. All staff should recognise that children are capable of abusing other children (including online). All staff should be clear about their school or college's policy and procedures with regard to child-on-child abuse.

193. Governing bodies and proprietors should ensure that their child protection policy includes:

- procedures to minimise the risk of child-on-child abuse,
- the systems in place (and they should be well promoted, easily understood and easily accessible) for children to confidently report abuse, knowing their concerns will be treated seriously,
- how allegations of child-on-child abuse will be recorded, investigated, and dealt with,

⁴³ [Section 35 of the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006](#).

⁴⁴ [Section 38 of the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006](#).

- clear processes as to how victims, perpetrators and any other children affected by child-on-child abuse will be supported,
- a recognition that even if there are no reported cases of child-on-child abuse, such abuse may still be taking place and is simply not being reported,
- a statement which makes clear there should be a zero-tolerance approach to abuse, and it should never be passed off as “banter”, “just having a laugh”, “part of growing up” or “boys being boys” as this can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviour, misogyny and an unsafe environment for children,
- recognition that for some (but not all) forms of child-on-child abuse it is more likely that girls will be victims and boys’ perpetrators, but that all child-on-child abuse is unacceptable and will be taken seriously, and
- the different forms of child-on-child abuse can take, such as:
 - bullying (including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying),
 - discriminatory behaviour, including racism, faith-targeted abuse, and other prejudice-based incidents,
 - abuse in intimate personal relationships between children (also known as teenage relationship abuse),
 - physical abuse which can include hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm,
 - physical assault and harm, or the threat of harm with a weapon,
 - harmful sexual behaviour, sexual violence and sexual harassment – which may include misogyny/misandry. Part five of this guidance sets out how schools and colleges should respond to reports of this nature,
 - consensual and non-consensual making or sharing of nudes and semi-nudes, including those generated using AI⁴⁵. The policy should include the school or college’s approach to it. The department provides [Searching Screening and Confiscation Advice](#) for schools. The UKCIS Education Group has published [Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people](#) which outlines how to respond to an incident,
 - 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,
 - upskirting (which is a criminal offence⁴⁶), which typically involves taking a

⁴⁵ Consensual image sharing, especially between older children of the same age, may require a different response. It might not be abusive, but children still need to know it is illegal, whilst non-consensual is illegal and abusive.

⁴⁶ [Voyeurism \(Offences\) Act 2019 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)

picture under a person's clothing without their permission, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress, or alarm, and initiation/hazing type violence and rituals.

Boarding schools, residential special schools, residential colleges and children's homes

194. Boarding schools, residential special schools, residential colleges and children's homes have additional factors to consider with regard to safeguarding.

195. Schools and colleges that provide such residential accommodation and/or are registered as children's homes should, amongst other things, be alert to the extra vulnerabilities of children with special educational needs and disabilities in such settings, inappropriate pupil or student relationships and the potential for child-on-child abuse, particularly in schools and colleges where there are significantly more girls than boys or vice versa. They should, generally be led by the designated safeguarding lead, work closely with the host local authority and, where relevant, any local authorities that have placed their children there.

196. Boarding schools, residential special schools, residential colleges, and children's homes have additional requirements in regard to safeguarding. These relate to National Minimum Standards and regulations for the relevant setting and all schools and colleges with residential provision for children must comply with their obligations relating to them.

197. The relevant standards and guidance for each sector are on GOV.UK and the relevant links are listed below:

- [The National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools](#)
- [The National Minimum Standards for Residential Special Schools](#)
- [Further Education residential accommodation: National Minimum Standards](#)
- [Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations](#)

198. In addition, [The Visits to Children in Long-Term Residential Care Regulations 2011](#) apply to children living away from home in residential settings for periods of three months or more (including those placed in residential schools and colleges). An appropriate representative from the accommodating local authority **must** visit these settings to ensure the welfare of these children.

Boarding and residential accommodation

199. This section applies to schools, institutions within the “further education sector” as defined by the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 and 16-19 academies, all of which are covered by part 6 of the Equality Act 2010. This section does not apply to colleges that are not 16-19 academies and are outside the “further education sector” as defined by the Further and Higher Education Act 1992. These colleges may be covered by part 3 or 5 of the Equality Act 2010 and they should take independent legal advice on compliance, taking into account their safeguarding obligations towards children and ensuring the provision of appropriate facilities for girls and boys that do not compromise their safety, comfort, privacy or dignity.

200. To comply with their safeguarding duties, schools and colleges must not allow a child to share overnight accommodation with a child of the opposite biological sex. Responding to a request to support any degree of social transition must not include allowing access to boarding or residential accommodation designated for the opposite sex.

201. In allocating sleeping arrangements such as dormitories, tents or shared rooms for school or college trips, schools and colleges must have regard to their duties under the Equality Act, their safeguarding obligations, and other relevant regulations and standards, including those relating to boarding and residential accommodation.

202. If, however, a child does not want to share a room with another child of the same biological sex, alternative arrangements should be sought where possible. Alternative arrangements should not compromise the safety, comfort, privacy or dignity of any child. They might include, for instance, finding a suitable separate room for the child.

203. Where a child’s concern reflects a request for support with social transition, the school or college should consider the section on “considering requests for support with social transition” before making any decisions.

204. Schools and colleges should have regard to the [National Minimum Standards for boarding schools](#), the [National Minimum Standards for residential special schools](#) and the [Further Education residential accommodation: national minimum standards](#), as appropriate.

The use of ‘reasonable force’ in schools

205. There are limited circumstances when it is appropriate for staff in schools to

use 'reasonable force' to safeguard children. The term 'reasonable force' covers the broad range of actions used by staff that involve a degree of physical contact to control or restrain children. This can range from guiding a child to safety by the arm, to more extreme circumstances such as breaking up a fight or where a child needs to be restrained to prevent violence or injury. 'Reasonable' in these circumstances means 'using no more force than is necessary for the least amount of time', the application of which will depend on the circumstances.

206. The department believes that the adoption of a 'no contact' policy at a school can leave staff unable to fully support and protect their pupils. The department therefore expects school leaders, governing bodies, and proprietors to adopt sensible policies, which allow and support their staff to make appropriate physical contact. The decision on whether or not to use 'reasonable force' to control or restrain a child is down to the professional judgement of the staff concerned within the context of the law and should always depend on individual circumstances. Advice on how to make this assessment is provided in the [Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force in school's](#) guidance.

207. When using 'reasonable force' in response to risks presented by incidents involving children with SEND, mental health problems or with medical conditions, schools should, in considering the risks carefully, recognise the additional vulnerability of these groups. They should also consider their duties under the [Equality Act 2010](#) (see paragraphs 92-96), for example in relation to making reasonable adjustments and their [Public Sector Equality Duty](#). By planning positive and proactive behaviour support, for instance through drawing up individual behaviour plans for more vulnerable children, and agreeing them with parents, schools can reduce the occurrence of challenging behaviour and the need to use 'reasonable force'.

- Departmental advice for schools is available at ['Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools'](#)
- HM Government guidance [Reducing the need for restraint and restrictive intervention](#) sets out how to support children and young people with learning disabilities, autistic spectrum conditions and mental health difficulties who are at risk of restrictive intervention in special education settings; however all schools and colleges may find the information helpful.

Use of school or college premises for non-school/college activities

208. Where governing bodies or proprietors hire or rent out school or college facilities/premises to organisations or individuals (for example to community

groups, sports associations, and service providers to run community or extra-curricular activities) they should ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place to keep children safe.

209. When services or activities are provided by the governing body or proprietor, under the direct supervision or management of their school or college staff, their arrangements for child protection will apply. However, where services or activities are provided separately by another body this is not necessarily the case. The governing body or proprietor should therefore seek assurance that the provider concerned has appropriate safeguarding and child protection policies and procedures in place (including inspecting these as needed); and ensure that there are arrangements in place for the provider to liaise with the school or college on these matters where appropriate. This applies regardless of whether or not the children who attend any of these services or activities are children on the school roll or attend the college. The governing body or proprietor should also ensure safeguarding requirements are included in any transfer of control agreement (i.e. lease or hire agreement), as a condition of use and occupation of the premises; and that failure to comply with this would lead to termination of the agreement. The guidance on [Keeping children safe in out-of-schools settings](#) details the safeguarding arrangements that schools and colleges should expect these providers to have in place.

Alternative Provision

210. Where a school places a pupil with an alternative provision provider, it continues to be responsible for the safeguarding of that pupil and should therefore be satisfied that the placement meets the pupils' needs.

211. The cohort of pupils in Alternative Provision often have complex needs; it is important that governing bodies and proprietors of these settings are aware of the additional risk of harm that their pupils may be vulnerable to. Schools should obtain written information from the alternative provider that appropriate safeguarding checks have been carried out on individuals working at their establishment (i.e. those checks that schools would otherwise perform on their own staff). This includes written confirmation that the alternative provider will inform the commissioning school of any arrangements that may put the child at risk (i.e. staff changes), so that the commissioning school can assure itself that appropriate safeguarding checks have been carried out on new staff.

212. The department has published voluntary [national standards for non-school alternative provision](#), alongside guidance to support schools and local authority commissioners in quality assuring providers. Local authorities may use the

standards to develop a register of approved settings for use by schools. However, schools remain ultimately responsible for the provision they commission. This means schools must continue to carry out safeguarding checks and conduct their own due diligence to ensure that the provision is appropriate for meeting each child's individual needs.

213. Schools should always know where a child is based during school hours. This includes having records of the address of the alternative provider and any subcontracted provision or satellite sites the child may attend. They should regularly review the alternative provision placements they make. Reviews should be frequent enough (at least half termly) to provide assurance that the child is regularly attending, and the placement continues to be safe and meets the child's needs. Where safeguarding concerns arise, the placement should be immediately reviewed, and terminated, if necessary, unless or until those concerns have been satisfactorily addressed.

214. The department has issued two pieces of statutory guidance to which commissioners of Alternative Provision should have regard:

- [Alternative Provision](#), and
- [Education for children with health needs who cannot attend school - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#).

215. The department has also published voluntary [national standards for non-school alternative provision](#).

Children potentially at greater risk of harm

216. Whilst all children should be protected, it is important that governing bodies and proprietors recognise (and reflect in their policies and procedures) that some groups of children are potentially at greater risk of harm than others (both online and offline). The list below is not exhaustive but highlights some of those groups.

Children who need a social worker (Child in Need and Child Protection Plans)

217. Children may need a social worker due to safeguarding or welfare needs. Children may need this help due to abuse and/or neglect and/or exploitation and/or complex family circumstances. A child's experiences of adversity and trauma can leave them vulnerable to further harm, as well as educationally disadvantaged in facing barriers to attendance, learning, behaviour, and mental health.

218. Local authorities should share the fact that a child has a social worker, and

the designated safeguarding lead should hold and use this information so that decisions can be made in the best interests of the child's safety, welfare and educational outcomes. This should be considered as a matter of routine. There are clear powers to share this information under existing duties on both local authorities and schools and colleges to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

219. Where children need a social worker, this should inform decisions about safeguarding (for example, responding to unauthorised absence or to a child missing education where there are known safeguarding risks) and about promoting welfare (for example, considering the provision of pastoral and/or academic support, alongside action by statutory services).

220. Findings from the Children in Need review, [Improving outcomes of children in need: literature review](#), contains further information, and the conclusion of the review, [Help, protection, education](#), provides detail about the action the government is taking to support this.

Children who are absent from education

221. Children being absent from education for prolonged periods and/or on repeat occasions can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues including neglect, child sexual and child criminal exploitation - particularly county lines. It is important the school or college's response to persistently absent pupils, and children missing education (CME) supports identifying such abuse, and in the case of absent pupils, helps prevent the risk of them becoming a child missing education in the future. This includes when problems are first emerging but also where a child is already known to local authority children's social care and needs a social worker (such as a child who is a child in need or who has a child protection plan, or is a looked after child), where being absent from education may increase known safeguarding risks within the family or in the community. Further information and support, includes:

- the department's statutory guidance on school attendance [Working together to improve school attendance](#) which sets out how schools must work with local authority children's services where school absence indicates safeguarding concerns,
- information regarding schools' duties for CME, which can be found in the department's statutory guidance: [Children Missing Education](#). This includes information schools must provide to the local authority when removing a child from the school roll at standard and non-standard transition points, along with how schools should be supporting local authorities with joint reasonable enquiries to help identify and support children missing in education,
- further information for colleges providing education for a child of compulsory

school age can be found in: [Full-time-Enrolment of 14 to 16 year olds in Further Education and Sixth Form Colleges](#), and

- general information and advice for schools and colleges can be found in the Government's [Missing Children and Adults Strategy](#).

Elective home education (EHE)

222. Many home educated children have a positive learning experience. We would expect the parents' decision to home educate to be made with their child's best education at the heart of the decision. 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.

223. In accordance with the [School Attendance \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2024](#), a school must make a return to the local authority when a pupil's name is deleted from the admission register.⁴⁷

224. Where a parent/carers has expressed their intention to remove a child from school with a view to educating at home, we recommend that local authorities, schools, and other key professionals work together to coordinate a meeting with parents/carers where possible. 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.

225. DfE guidance for local authorities on [Elective home education](#) sets out the role and responsibilities of local authorities and their powers to engage with parents. Although this is primarily aimed at local authorities, schools should also be familiar with this guidance.

Children requiring mental health support

226. Schools and colleges have an important role to play in supporting the mental health and wellbeing of their pupils.

227. All staff should be aware that mental health problems can, in some cases, develop into safeguarding concerns. This could include self-harm, signs of an

⁴⁷ This requirement does not apply where a pupil's name is deleted after they have completed the final year at the school (e.g. Year 6 at a typical primary school) unless the local authority have asked to be informed about such deletions.

eating disorder, suicidal ideation or suicide. They could also be an indicator that a child has suffered or is at risk of suffering abuse, neglect or exploitation.

228. Only appropriately trained professionals should attempt to make a diagnosis of a mental health problem. Education staff, however, still have an important role to play. Specifically, they can support the fulfilment of 4 key roles:

- promoting good mental wellbeing and preventing the onset of mental illness,
- observing pupils and identifying early those who may be experiencing mental health problems or being at risk of developing one,
- ensuring early targeted support is provided, and
- liaison with/referral to specialist services where needed.

229. Where support is needed, the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) should consider whether to inform parents or carers to support the child's wellbeing, where doing so would not place the child at additional risk.

230. Whilst all staff are able to [observe and support the mental health and wellbeing of their pupils and learners](#), most schools and colleges also have a mental health lead in place. Mental health leads should support settings to embed a whole school or college approach to mental health and wellbeing.

231. The [Promoting children and young people's mental health and wellbeing](#) guidance sets out how schools and colleges can help prevent mental health problems by promoting wellbeing and resilience as part of an integrated, whole school/college approach to social and emotional wellbeing, which is tailored to the needs of their pupils and learners.

232. Education staff should consider the range of locally available support to meet the needs of children and young people. Where education staff already have access, they should make use of support from their respective Mental Health Support Team (MHST), which are in the process of being rolled out to all schools and colleges. As well as delivering evidence-based interventions for early support for mental health issues, MHSTs support mental health leads to develop their whole school or college approach to mental health and wellbeing, and give timely advice, liaising with external specialist services, to help children and young people to get the right support. They should also consider other support available outside of education settings that might be suitable, for example early support hubs and young futures hubs.

233. Schools and colleges can also access advice to [help them identify children in need of extra mental health support](#). Additional guidance and resources can be found on the [Promoting and supporting mental health and wellbeing in schools and colleges](#) website on GOV.UK. The department has also published advice and

guidance on [Preventing and tackling bullying](#) (which may also be useful for colleges).

234. The NHS Every Mind Matters website also contains helpful information and advice about [Looking after a child or young person's mental health](#). In addition, the [Hub of Hope](#) is the UK's leading mental health support database. It brings local, national, peer, community, charity, private and NHS mental health support and services together in one place, so that anyone struggling can find the most appropriate support.

Looked after children and previously looked after children

235. The most common reason for children becoming looked after⁴⁸ is as a result of abuse and/or neglect. Governing bodies and proprietors should ensure that staff have the skills, knowledge and understanding to keep looked after children safe.

236. In particular, they should ensure that appropriate staff have access to the information they need in relation to a child's looked after legal status (whether they are looked after under voluntary arrangements with consent of parents, or on an interim or full care order) and the child's contact arrangements with birth parents or those with parental responsibility.

237. They should also have information about the child's care arrangements and the levels of authority delegated to the carer by the authority looking after him/her. The designated safeguarding lead⁴⁹ should have details of the child's social worker and the name of the Virtual School Head (see paragraphs 241-246) in the authority that looks after the child.

238. A previously looked after child potentially remains vulnerable and all staff should have the skills, knowledge and understanding to keep previously looked after children safe. When dealing with looked after children and previously looked after children, it is important that all agencies work together and prompt action is taken when necessary to safeguard these children, who are a particularly vulnerable group.

The designated teacher

239. Governing bodies of maintained schools and proprietors of academies must

⁴⁸ A child who is looked after by a local authority (referred to as a looked-after-child) as defined in [section 22 Children Act 1989](#), means a child who is subject to a care order (interim or full care order) or who is voluntarily accommodated by the local authority.

⁴⁹ In maintained schools and academies, the designated safeguarding lead should work closely with the designated teacher.

appoint a designated teacher⁵⁰ and should work with local authorities to promote the educational achievement of registered pupils who are looked after. With the commencement of sections 4 to 6 of the [Children and Social Work Act 2017](#), designated teachers have responsibility for promoting the educational achievement of children who have left care through adoption, special guardianship or child arrangement orders or who were adopted from state care outside England and Wales.⁵¹ The designated teacher must have appropriate training and the relevant qualifications and experience⁵². In other schools and colleges, an appropriately trained teacher should take the lead.

240. The statutory guidance [Designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children](#) contains further information on the role and responsibilities of the designated teacher.

Virtual School Heads

241. Virtual School Heads⁵³ manage pupil premium plus for looked after children⁵⁴, and receive this funding based on the latest published number of children looked after by the local authority. In maintained schools and academies, the designated teacher should work with the Virtual School Head to discuss how funding can be best used to support the progress of looked after children in the school and meet the needs identified in the child's personal education plan.⁵⁵ The designated teacher should also work with the Virtual School Head to promote the educational achievement of previously looked after children. In other schools and colleges, an appropriately trained teacher should take the lead.

242. As with designated teachers, following the commencement of sections 4 to 6 of the [Children and Social Work Act 2017](#), Virtual School Heads have responsibilities towards children who have left care through adoption, special guardianship, or child arrangement orders or who were adopted from state care

⁵⁰ [Section 20 of the Children and Young Persons Act 2008](#) sets this requirement for maintained schools. This legislation and accompanying statutory guidance on [the role of designated teacher](#) applies to academies through their funding agreements.

⁵¹ For the purposes of the role of the Virtual School Head and designated teacher, under the [Children and Social Work Act 2017](#), previously looked-after children are those who: are no longer looked after by a local authority in England and Wales (as defined by [the Children Act 1989](#) or Part 6 of the [Social Services and Well-being \(Wales\) Act 2014](#)) because they are the subject of an adoption, special guardianship or child arrangements order; or were adopted from 'state care' outside England and Wales.

⁵² Section 20(3) of the [Children and Young Persons Act 2008](#) and regulation 3 of the [Designated Teacher \(Looked-After Pupils etc\) \(England\) Regulations 2009](#).

⁵³ Section 22(3B) of [the Children Act 1989](#) requires local authorities in England to appoint at least one person for the purpose of discharging the local authority's duty to promote the educational achievement of its looked after children. That person (known as the Virtual School Head) must be an officer employed by the authority or another local authority in England.

⁵⁴ Pupil premium plus for previously looked after children is managed by their school.

⁵⁵ All looked after children must have a personal education plan (PEP). This is part of the care plan that the local authority looking after the child must have in place and review regularly.

outside England or Wales. Their primary role for this group will be the provision of information and advice to relevant parties.⁵⁶

243. The statutory guidance on [Promoting the education of looked-after and previously looked-after children](#) contains further information on the roles and responsibilities of Virtual School Heads.

244. In addition to their statutory duties, the role of Virtual School Heads was extended in June 2021, to include a non-statutory responsibility for the strategic oversight of the educational attendance, attainment, and progress of children with a social worker. Recognising attendance as a key factor in safeguarding, Virtual School Heads should work with local authorities to set and report on ambitious targets to improve their attendance.

245. In offering advice and information to workforces that have relationships with children with social workers, Virtual School Heads should identify and engage with key professionals, helping them to understand the role they have in improving outcomes for children. This should include designated safeguarding leads, social workers, headteachers, governors, special educational needs coordinators (SENCOs), mental health leads, other local authority officers, including Designated Social Care Officers for SEND, where they exist.

246. In September 2024, the role of Virtual School Heads was further extended to include a non-statutory responsibility to promote the educational achievement of all children in kinship care. Non-statutory guidance on [Promoting the education of children with a social worker](#) and children in kinship care arrangements contains further information on the roles and responsibilities of Virtual School Heads.

Care leavers

247. Local authorities have on-going responsibilities to the children who cease to be looked after and become care leavers.⁵⁷ That includes keeping in touch with them, preparing an assessment of their needs and appointing a Personal Advisor who develops a pathway plan with the young person. That plan describes how the local authority will support the care leaver to participate in education or training. Designated safeguarding leads should therefore have details of the local authority

⁵⁶ Any person that has parental responsibility for the child; providers of funded early years education, designated teachers for previously looked-after children in maintained schools and academies, and any other person the authority considers appropriate for promoting the educational achievement of relevant children.

⁵⁷ A care leaver who is 16 or 17 (referred to in legislation as a 'relevant child' is defined in section 23A(2) of [the Children Act 1989](#) as a child who is (a) not looked after (b) aged 16 or 17, and (c) was, before ceasing to be looked after by a local authority, looked after for a period of 13 weeks, or periods amounting in total to 13 weeks, beginning after they have reached the age of 14 and ended after they have reached the age of 16.

Personal Advisor appointed to guide and support the care leaver and should liaise with them as necessary regarding any issues of concern affecting the care leaver.

Young carers

248. Schools and colleges should be alert to the needs of young carers, recognising that caring responsibilities can impact on their attendance, attainment, behaviour and wellbeing. Early identification is essential to ensure young carers receive support at the right time and by the appropriate services including additional support from external partners, or local authority and health services.

Children with special educational needs, disabilities or health issues

249. Children with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) or certain medical or physical health conditions can face additional safeguarding challenges both online and offline. Governing bodies and proprietors should ensure their child protection policy reflects the fact that additional barriers can exist when recognising abuse, neglect and exploitation in this group of children. These can include:

- assumptions that indicators of possible abuse such as behaviour, mood and injury relate to the child's condition 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 disproportionately impacted by behaviours such as bullying, without outwardly showing any signs,
- communication barriers and difficulties in managing or reporting these challenges risks that they do not understand that 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.

250. Any reports of abuse involving children with SEND will therefore require close liaison with the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) and the special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) or the named person with oversight for SEND in a college.

251. Schools and colleges should consider extra pastoral support and attention for these children, along with ensuring any appropriate support for communication is in place. Further information can be found in the departments:

- [SEND Code of Practice 0 to 25 years](#), and
- [Supporting Pupils at School with Medical Conditions](#).

And from specialist organisations such as:

- The Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information and Support Services (SENDIASS). SENDIASS offer information, advice and support for parents and carers of children and young people with SEND. All local authorities have such a service: [Find your local IAS service \(councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk\)](#),
- [Mencap](#) - Represents people with learning disabilities, with specific advice and information for people who work with children and young people, and
- [NSPCC - Safeguarding children with special educational needs and disabilities \(SEND\)](#) and [NSPCC - Safeguarding child protection/deaf and disabled children and young people](#).

Safeguarding children with medical conditions

252. The fact that there has been an incident relating to the management of a child or young person's medical condition (including allergies) would not in and of itself warrant a referral to local safeguarding partners. A safeguarding referral would only be needed where an incident highlighted concern that the child or young person might be at an increased risk of being neglected, abused or exploited by persons inside or outside of their family unit because of their medical condition. This might occur where relevant information about a child or young person's medical condition is not provided to a school, college or setting, or where they are repeatedly sent without essential medication, thereby putting the individual at risk. Further information is provided in our statutory guidance on [supporting Pupils at School with Medical Conditions](#) and [Allergy safety in schools](#). Statutory guidance about the support that pupils with medical conditions and allergies should receive at school.

Children who are lesbian, gay or bisexual

253. A child or young person being lesbian, gay, or bisexual is not in itself a risk factor for harm; however, they can sometimes be vulnerable to discriminatory bullying. 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. Schools and colleges should consider how to address vulnerabilities such

as the risk of bullying and take steps to prevent it, including putting appropriate sanctions in place.

Children who are questioning their gender

254. In recent years, we have seen a significant increase in the number of children who are questioning the way they feel about being a boy or a girl, including the physical attributes of their sex and the related ways in which they fit into society.

255. It is not for schools and colleges to initiate any action in this area; this guidance is focused on circumstances where a child or their parent has raised a request relating to social transition to which a school or college is responding.

256. Schools and colleges should keep in mind that it is common for children to engage in activities that are less typically associated with their sex. For example, at primary school age, girls may play with trucks, or boys may dress in clothes that are perceived as feminine. Sometimes young children also go through a period of questioning their gender but for the majority this will not continue into adulthood, while a small proportion may continue to question their gender and this feeling may intensify into puberty.

257. Schools and colleges should take time to understand the thoughts and feelings of children who are questioning their gender and should be appropriately professionally curious about the full range of the child's experiences. Schools and colleges should remain aware of the potential vulnerabilities of children who are questioning their gender, including the possibility of complex mental health and psychosocial needs, for example relating to relationships with family, peers or their broader social environment, including discriminatory bullying.

258. Schools and colleges should consider adopting policies across school and college life that maintain flexibility and avoid rigid rules based on gender stereotypes.

Schools and colleges should be respectful places where bullying is never tolerated

259. We know that bullying has a detrimental impact on young people's mental health and their ability to thrive at school and college. Bullying can affect a child's attainment and wellbeing. We are clear that all forms of bullying, for whatever reason, are unacceptable. Schools and colleges must take a strong, proactive stand against all forms of bullying, and schools and colleges should tackle bullying at the earliest opportunity to prevent it from escalating.

Considering requests for support with social transition

260. Schools and colleges should not initiate any action regarding social transition; this guidance applies where a child or their parent has requested that the school make changes or put support in place in order to facilitate the child presenting as the opposite biological sex (“social transition”). Members of staff should not adopt any changes relating to social transition unless a decision has been made by a school or college and a child’s parents or carers have been involved as set out in this guidance.

261. Schools and colleges should consider whether pupils would be best supported by a policy on social transition which explains the steps that a school or college will go through when a child requests support. When considering any request for support with social transition, schools and colleges should ensure that their decision-making process is documented and records are kept.

262. In making decisions about supporting social transition, schools and colleges must comply with their distinct but interacting obligations under safeguarding legislation and equality and human rights law, ensuring that any assessment of discrimination is informed by their evaluation of the welfare and best interests of the child and other children.

263. Schools and colleges should make decisions in line with the following principles and ensure that their decision-making process is documented and records are kept:

Schools and colleges have statutory duties to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children

264. Schools and colleges have a statutory duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children. They should consider how best to fulfil that duty towards a child who is questioning their gender, as well as their peers, ensuring that any agreed course of action takes account of the impact on all of those affected.

265. This means that the first step when considering a child’s request for support with social transition will be to consider what is in the best interests of the child and other children, and a decision relating to social transition may not be the same as a child’s wishes.

266. As below, in the vast majority of cases we would expect the school or college to work with parents or carers to determine what is in the best interests of the child as well as considering any clinical evidence or advice and seeking any additional non-clinical professional advice where relevant (for example from

the SENCO), including involving the designated safeguarding lead⁵⁸. Schools and colleges should consider everything that could be affecting a child, including whether they have any wider health issues or neurodiversity. In considering the best interests of children, schools and colleges should also take into account the principle below on taking a careful approach.

267. Schools should be particularly conscious of safeguarding concerns relating to primary aged children. For example, the Cass Review⁵⁹ noted evidence that children who socially transition before puberty – and those who transition prior to receiving clinical advice – are more likely to proceed to a medical pathway than those who do not. Schools should also keep in mind that some children who socially transition before puberty will be “living in stealth” meaning other pupils and/or staff may be unaware of their biological sex, and schools should be aware of related safeguarding concerns as in the section below on living in stealth.

Parents and carers should be actively involved and their views treated with importance

268. Parents and carers have the leading role in the lives of their children, and this area should be no exception. Therefore, where a child who is questioning their gender asks for support from a school or college, schools and colleges should engage parents/carers as a matter of priority. It is important that the views of the child’s parents or carers should carry great weight and be properly considered. However, in the rare circumstances where involving parents or carers would constitute a greater risk to the child than not involving them, the school or college should involve their designated safeguarding lead⁶⁰ to determine what action is needed to safeguard the child, before the parents or carers are contacted or any decisions are taken.

269. The Cass Review is clear that outcomes for children and adolescents are best if they have a supportive relationship with their families and, in the vast majority of cases, we would expect schools/colleges and parents/carers to work together to establish what is best for the child. Involving a child’s parents/carers in this way will enable schools and colleges to promote a child’s wellbeing and protect them from harm.

270. Schools and colleges should explore how best to support these conversations, including offering a staff member to be present or to speak to parents or carers on the child’s behalf.

⁵⁸ Some colleges may not have DSLs and where that is the case this does not apply.

⁵⁹ [An independent review of gender identity services for children](#) which was published in April 2024.

⁶⁰ Some colleges may not have DSLs and where that is the case this does not apply.

271. The advice above applies in cases where a child has requested support with social transition. In cases where a child confides in a member of staff about their feelings but does not ask the school or college to make changes to how they are treated, there is no reason to break any confidence unless there is a related safeguarding risk. Schools and colleges should follow their usual procedures where a conversation with a child raises concerns about the child's wellbeing or safety, including involving parents or carers where appropriate.

Accommodating social transition is an active intervention so schools and colleges should take a very careful approach

272. Schools and colleges should take a very careful approach in relation to social transition. The Cass Review acknowledged that there is a lack of good evidence on the long-term impact of social transition on young people, but it is clear that social transition should be viewed as an active intervention that may have significant effects on the child or young person in terms of their psychological functioning and longer-term outcomes.

273. Primary schools should exercise particular caution, and we would expect support for full social transition to be agreed very rarely. Schools should keep in mind the emphasis in the Cass Review on early clinical involvement when families are considering social transition for pre-pubertal children, including how to support their children in a non-directive way, whilst also keeping options open and flexible. The Cass Review emphasised that clinical involvement in the decision-making process should include advising on the risks and benefits of social transition as a planned intervention, referencing best available evidence. This is not a role that can be undertaken by staff without appropriate clinical training.

274. The Cass Review acknowledges that older children will generally have greater agency to make their own decisions. Maintaining flexibility and keeping children's options open will help to avoid a child feeling they are under pressure to commit to a potentially irrevocable pathway when they are young.

Schools and colleges should comply with obligations under the Equality Act and Human Rights Act when considering requests for support with social transition

275. As well as complying with their safeguarding obligations as above, schools and colleges must also comply with their duties under the Equality Act 2010 and the Human Rights Act 1998.⁶¹

⁶¹ Part 6 of the Equality Act 2010 applies to schools, 16-19 academies and colleges that are within the "further education sector" as defined by the Further and Higher Education Act 1992. Different parts of the Equality Act 2010 apply to colleges that are not 16-19 academies or within the "further education sector" as defined by the Further and Higher Education Act 1992. These colleges may be a service provider for the purposes of part 3 or they may be covered by part

276. In line with the responsibilities of schools and colleges to adhere to the highest standards of safeguarding for the children and young people in their care, alongside obligations under the School Premises (England) Regulations 2012 and the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, schools must not allow pupils into toilets, changing rooms, or boarding or residential accommodation designated for the opposite sex, with no exceptions.⁶² Similarly, where schools have implemented single-sex sports as being necessary for safety reasons, there should be no exceptions and pupils must not be allowed to participate in sports designated for the opposite sex⁶³. Colleges to which part 6 of the Equality Act 2010 applies should follow the same principles.

277. In relation to other policies, the school or college will need to consider whether the policy will place a child who is questioning their gender (and other gender-questioning children) at a disadvantage relative to other children.⁶⁴ Schools and colleges should consider this both when developing the policy itself and when considering requests to be exempt from such policies. Where the rule or policy does place a gender-questioning child (and other gender-questioning children) at a disadvantage compared with those who are not gender-questioning, the school or college should consider the following:

- (1) Does the policy have a legitimate aim? For example, safeguarding or fairness in sport.
- (2) Is the policy a proportionate means of achieving that legitimate aim? This will involve considering:
 - whether there is another way of achieving the same aim. Might a policy be adopted or an exception made that still achieves that aim?
 - the impact of the rule, or of making an exception (or not making an exception) on the child themselves and anyone else affected? The school or college should balance the impact of agreeing the child's request against the impact of refusing their request, taking into account all the relevant

5 of the Equality Act 2010.

⁶² See the sections on "Regulations and safeguarding requirements relating to school premises," and "Boarding and residential accommodation."

⁶³ See the section on "Sport."

⁶⁴ Schools and colleges must undertake this balanced consideration in order to ensure that they do not discriminate against children with the protected characteristic of gender reassignment when taking decisions in this area. Some gender questioning children may not have the protected characteristic of gender reassignment. In practice, it may be very difficult for a school or college to determine whether a gender-questioning child has this protected characteristic or not. We therefore advise schools and colleges that where it is unclear whether a child has this protected characteristic, they should proceed as if the child does have the protected characteristic and apply the considerations relating to the Equality Act and Human Rights Act set out above.

factors. This will include taking into account the school or college's judgment about whether supporting social transition is in the child's best interests and the best interests of other children, as above.

Discussing constraints

278. When discussing requests with children, schools and colleges to which part 6 of the Equality Act applies should take time to sensitively explain the constraints on social transition set out in this guidance. This includes schools explaining that supporting any degree of social transition will not include allowing access to toilets, changing rooms or boarding or residential accommodation designated for the opposite sex, and will not include allowing children to join PE classes designated for the opposite sex where there are safety reasons for single-sex PE.⁶⁵

279. The school or college should also make sure that children and their families are aware that while the school or college will appropriately sanction any cases of bullying or harassment, and take a strong stand against bullying, the school or college must also be conscious of the rights of pupils and staff in relation to their religion or belief. However, schools and colleges supporting social transition might consider discussing options with pupils and staff such as using names instead of pronouns.

Reviews

280. The circumstances of a case and/or the needs of a child may change over time. For example, it may become known that there are safeguarding issues that were not previously apparent (including where a young child is 'living in stealth' - see below), or that a decision has placed an unsustainable pressure on a school or college's resources. In such cases, the school or college may need to review their original decision taking into account the factors set out above, including involving the child's parents or carers. In deciding whether to review a decision, the school or college should involve their designated safeguarding lead immediately.⁶⁶

281. We expect that as well as revisiting decisions at appropriate points, schools and colleges will in particular want to consider whether previous decisions taken

⁶⁵ Part 6 of the Equality Act 2010 applies to schools, institutions within the "further education sector" as defined by the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 and 16-19 academies. This paragraph does not apply to colleges that are not 16-19 academies and are outside the "further education sector" for the purposes of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992. These colleges may be covered by part 3 or part 5 of the Equality Act 2010 and they should take independent legal advice on compliance with such, taking into account their safeguarding obligations towards children and ensuring the provision of appropriate facilities for girls and boys that do not compromise their safety, comfort, privacy or dignity.

⁶⁶ Some colleges may not have DSLs and where that is the case this does not apply.

prior to this guidance coming into force remain appropriate, taking into account the impact of making any changes on the child in question and considering the principle above about involving parents or carers.

Correct information

282. Having the correct information about a child is important in the context of schools and colleges fulfilling their safeguarding duties, and they should make sure all relevant staff are aware of a child's biological sex in all cases. Schools and colleges are legally required to record a child's biological sex accurately wherever it is recorded.

Children living in stealth

283. Schools and colleges should be particularly conscious of the vulnerabilities of children who have fully socially transitioned from an early age and may be living in stealth (that is, school or college friends/staff may be unaware of their biological sex). The Cass Review emphasised that these children are likely to approach puberty in a fearful and anxious state. Schools and colleges should involve the designated safeguarding lead in these cases.⁶⁷

Support for children who wish to detransition

284. There may be circumstances where a child wants to fully or partially reverse a request that has previously been agreed. The Cass Review highlighted the importance of maintaining flexibility and keeping options open for children who have socially transitioned and recommended that support should be provided to children who wish to de-transition. Schools and colleges should work closely with parents or carers and relevant experts to ensure that children in this position are supported.

⁶⁷ Some colleges may not have DSLs and where that is the case this does not apply.

Annex C: KCSIE 2026: Summary of changes

This summary explains where we have made changes to KCSIE 2025 and our rationale for doing so.

KCSIE has been revised regularly for many years, and we intend that it will continue to be revised and improved on a regular basis. This update reflects substantive changes that strengthen or clarify existing content, changes to multi agency working ahead of any legislation changes in the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill, where appropriate the recent Casey Audit, and adds content in relation to Violence Against Women and Girls.

This Government is clear that there are and will continue to be further learnings about how we can better protect children in the future as we come to understand more clearly what has gone wrong in the past and schools and colleges will continue to need to play an incredibly important role in this.

Summary: About the guidance

About this guidance

Section 3 of the *Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework* should be read alongside KCSIE where children aged 0 to 5 attend school-based nurseries or reception classes.

Added a section regarding the use of “*nudes and semi-nudes*” throughout KCSIE with an explainer.

Throughout the guidance

References to the withdrawn Annex A (condensed Part one) have been removed, as all staff are expected to read Part one in full.

Updated terminology to include “*universal services and community-based early help*” and “*the targeted early help level of Family Help*.”

Replaced “*indecent*”, “*nude, semi-nude*” and “*also known as sexting or youth produced sexual imagery*” with “*making or sharing of nudes or semi-nudes*”.

Updated the definition of “*assault by penetration*.”

Updated the definition of “*sexual abuse*” to mirror the definition used in Working Together to Safeguard Children.

Updated the definition of “*sexual assault*.”

Added further references to “*misogyny*.”

Retitled “*Child-on-child abuse*” to “*Child-on-child abuse (including harassment and violence)*.”

Summary: Part one – Safeguarding information for all staff

Updated to distinguish between community-based early help and targeted early help delivered through “Family Help”.

Expanded examples of issues staff should remain alert to.

Added “*modern slavery*.”

Added “*including physical, sexual, and emotional abuse, stalking*” and “*financial exploitation*.”

Added additional sentence about child to parent or care giver abuse.

Clarified that emotional abuse may include verbal abuse (e.g., criticism, belittling, name-calling).

Expanded section on sexual abuse to provide clear examples of physical contact

Clarified that safeguarding issues often overlap.

Expanded child-on-child abuse content to emphasise that: it is a safeguarding issue for both victim and alleged perpetrator, it is preventable and it may involve serious physical harm or threats involving weapons.

Expanded Child Criminal Exploitation and Child Sexual Exploitation content: “*This can be committed or facilitated by an organised network or gang, and victims may identify as part of this group.*”, “*This may constitute modern slavery...*” and a reference to Modern Slavery statutory guidance, including referral expectations. Added a new footnote defining county lines and linking to Home Office guidance.

Added “This can be committed by an individual or an organised network...” and “Most sexual abuse is committed by individuals known to the victim.” Added clarification that victims may be criminalised for actions taken under coercion. Added a footnote defining “*organised network*” (from the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse).

Mental Health section: substantially updated.

Serious Violence section: substantially updated.

Added additional info to bullet about managing any support for the child internally.

Updated header and clarified when non-social-worker practitioners may lead assessments.

Added expectations regarding local assessment protocols.

Added references to *“trainee teachers”*.

Added requirement to consider referral to the LADO.

Updated flowchart correcting “Early Help to “Family Help”, and improving accessibility.

Summary: Part two – The management of safeguarding

Data Protection: Updated to reflect the Data (Use and Access) Act 2025, effective from January 2026.

Added new section on *“Sport”*.

Added new section on *“Regulations and safeguarding requirements relating to school premises”*.

Added expectations for robust DSL cover arrangements (e.g., confidential shared mailbox).

Added more detailed information about sharing information.

Expanded guidance on information sharing, including risk assessment.

Added *“racism”* and *“derogatory behaviour or other forms of physical violence and conflict.”*

Minor revised content on racism, and other prejudice-based behaviour to mirror expectation in *Working Together to Safeguard Children*.

Added details on PSHE Association approved resources.

Updated definitions of online risk categories.

Added guidance and resources on safe and effective use of Generative AI in education.

Added new section on *“Mobile phone policy”*.

Updated wording “...ensure that a review of their effectiveness is carried out at least once every academic year. Reviews should be carried out by the SLT member responsible for filtering and monitoring, with the support of the school’s DSL and IT support. They should include checks that filtering is working appropriately on all internet-connected devices in all relevant locations, and a record should be kept of these

checks...”

Redrafted to improve clarity on information security.

Added references to “trainee teachers”.

Updated the list of factors that a school’s child protection policy should include.

Added reference to “misandry”.

Added new section on “Boarding and residential accommodation”.

Updated section on reasonable force to reflect new restrictive intervention guidance.

Updated content relating to alternative provision.

Updated section on “Children requiring mental health support”.

Highlighted the role of Virtual School Heads in improving attendance.

Added new section on “Young carers” and their specific needs.

Added further additional barriers that children with SEND may face.

Added new section on safeguarding children with medical conditions.

Updated content on children who are LGB or gender-questioning.

Summary: Part three – Safer recruitment

Regulated activity section rewritten for clarity and to include volunteers. Regulated activity table updated to remove the ‘supervision exemption’ from regulated activity. This change has been made by the Crime and Policing Act 2026. Removed “DBS check types” section to avoid duplication.

Minor change to Regulated activity section to make clearer that where schools are also subject to the EYFS framework, staff or volunteers must not be permitted to begin working within the setting covered by the EYFS framework until the school has received the enhanced DBS certificate, including barred list information.

Added new bullet on DBS checks for volunteers in regulated activity Updated

references from TRA Employer Access Service to DfE's Check a teacher's record.

Added *"or within 30 calendar days of the issue date on the certificate."*

Removed the DBS Criminal Record Checks and Barred List Checks flowchart as it was no longer factually accurate following the removal of 'supervision exemption' from regulated activity under the Crime and Policing Act 2026.

Clarifies the type of DBS check a self-employed person is now eligible for.

Clarified categories of visitors to schools.

Volunteer Section rewritten to remove the 'supervision exemption' from regulated activity. This change has been made by the Crime and Policing Act 2026.

Work experience supervision section rewritten for clarity and in response to the Crime and Policing Act 2026 change to the definition of regulated activity.

Moved former Annex D (homestay) into main body.

Existing staff paragraph updated to include volunteers.

Duty to refer section rewritten to include referrals about volunteers.

Added reference to schools' duties under the PSED.

Summary: Part four – Safeguarding concerns or allegations made about staff, including supply teachers, trainee teachers, volunteers, and contractors

Reference to *"Trainee teachers"* added throughout.

Updated supply teachers, trainee teachers and all contracted staff section to make it clearer that schools and colleges share safeguarding responsibilities with third party organisations.

New content setting expectations for handling concerns about trainee teachers.

Summary: Part five – Child-on-child sexual harassment and sexual violence

Part five substantially rewritten to highlight the progressive continuum from harmful sexual behaviour through to sexual violence.

Updated to clarify that all incidents involving the sharing of nude or semi-nude images require a safeguarding response, whether they are consensual or non-consensual.

Additional paragraph added on HSB.

Added link to NSPCC resource providing advice on stages of typical sexual development and behaviour for different age groups.

Added link to resource for advice on responding to children who display sexualized behaviour.

Added further information on consent

Updated header and expanded description of universal services and community-based early help.

Added new section on *“Referrals to Family Help”*.

Summary: Annex A – Further information (previously Annex B in KCSIE 2025)

Annex A (condensed Part one) removed and replaced with previous Annex B.

Cybercrime section expanded with detail on CMA offences and national risks.

Domestic Violence content updated.

Operation Encompass content updated.

Online safety (parental support) now includes link to screentime guidance.

Additional section added on “Temporary accommodation notification duty”, including updated link.

Additional info added to paragraph on Channel to include clarification that information should be shared with the police.

Serious violence content update.

Links added to examples of support for DSLs.

Link to Home Office child knife possession guidance included.

Summary: Annex B – Role of the Designated Safeguarding Lead (previously Annex C in KCSIE 2025)

Added expectations around DSL cover arrangements when the DSL is unavailable.

Added further information to information sharing guidance.

Updates on CCE/CSE indicators and Operation Encompass duties.

Summary: Annex C – Regulated activity (children) – Supervision of activity which is regulated activity when unsupervised (previously Annex E in KCSIE 2025)

Removed, Crime and Policing Bill Act 2026 made changes to regulated activity to remove the 'supervision exemption'. This means that any person volunteering in a school or college in a role that involves teaching, training, instructing or supervising children on more than 3 days in a month or overnight is now in regulated activity.



Department
for Education

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