

Little Stars Pre School
Safeguarding
Child Protection / Safeguarding Policy

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Yellow – September 2024 Changes

Green – September 2025 Changes

Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to inform staff, students, parents/carers, and volunteers, about the Pre Schools responsibilities for safeguarding children and to enable everyone to have a clear understanding of how these responsibilities should be carried out.

Staff take their responsibilities seriously to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in their care. It is essential that everybody working at Little Stars Pre School understands their safeguarding responsibility. Everybody in contact with children at Little Stars Pre School must read at least Part one of "Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025".

The Pre School and its staff are an important part of the wider community for safeguarding children. This system is described in statutory guidance Working Together to Safeguard Children.

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is **everyone's** responsibility. **Everyone** who comes into contact with children and their families has a role to play. In order to fulfil this responsibility effectively, all 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.

We recognize that all adults working at the Pre School whether permanent, temporary or training have a full active part to play in protecting children from harm and that the children's welfare is our paramount concern.

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 families and children has a role to play in identifying concerns, sharing information and taking prompt action. All staff members know that our setting should provide a caring, positive safe and stimulating environment that promotes the social, physical development of the individual child.

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is defined for the purposes of this guidance as: protecting children from maltreatment; preventing impairment of children's mental and physical health or development; ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care; taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes, the term "children" includes everyone under the age of 18, in the Pre School's care.

Staff working with children are advised to maintain an attitude of "it could happen to a child we know" where safeguarding is concerned. When safeguarding the welfare of a child, staff members should always act in the interests of the child.

Wherever the word "staff" is used this covers all staff on site, volunteers, contractors, visitors, students, students on placement, agency staff.

At Little Stars we will:

- Support the child's development in ways that will foster security, confidence, and independence.
- Staff are particularly important as they are able to identify concerns early, provide help for children, and prevent concerns from escalating.
- Provide an environment in which children feel safe in which children can learn, feel secure valued and respected. One in which they feel confident and know how to approach adults if they feel worried about being listened to.
- All staff should be prepared to identify children who may benefit from early help, early help means providing support as soon as a problem emerges at any point in a child's life, from the foundation years through to teenage years.
- Provide a systematic means of monitoring children known or thought to be at risk of harm, and ensure we, the Pre School contribute to assessments of need and support packages for those children.
- Maintain good levels of communication between all staff and other agencies.
- Regularly review a structured procedure within the Pre School which followed by all staff in suspected cases of abuse.
- Develop and promote effective working relationships with other agencies, especially police and children's services.
- Ensure that all adults at our setting that have been recruited, checked as to their suitability with keeping children safe

- Any staff member who has concerns about a child's welfare should follow the process set out in "Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025", staff should be expected to support social workers and other agencies following any referral.
- A member of the designated Safeguarding Lead will always remain on site.
- Designated Safeguarding Lead are most likely to have a complete safeguarding picture and be the most appropriate person to advise on the response to safeguarding concerns.
- 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

We do this by:

- Having daily review meetings
- Having clear procedures and actions to follow when handling suspected cases of abuse.
- Having a clear induction procedure for new staff, policies for all staff to be aware on induction Child Protection Policy, Behaviour Policy, Staff Behaviour Policy, Safeguarding response for children who go missing from education, Role of designated Safeguarding Lead, **Copy of Part one "Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025"**
- Ensuring **All** staff should receive appropriate safeguarding and child protection training which is regularly updated. In addition, all staff should receive safeguarding and child protection updates (for example, via email, bulletins, and staff meetings), as required, and at least annually, to provide them with relevant skills and knowledge to safeguard children effectively
- Ensuring All** staff are kept updated with changes and should be aware of their local early help process and understand their role in it.
- **Ensuring All** staff should be aware of the process for making referrals to children's social care and for statutory assessments under the Children Act 1989, especially section 17 (children in need) and section 47 (a child suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm) that may follow a referral, along with the role they might be expected to play in such assessments.
- Ensuring All** staff know what to do if a child tells them he/she is being abused or neglected. Staff should know how to manage the requirement to maintain an appropriate level of confidentiality. This means only involving those who need to be involved, such as the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) and children's social care. Staff should never promise a child that they will not tell anyone about a report of abuse, as this may ultimately not be in the best interests of the child
- All staff will receive appropriate safeguarding training and child protection training including online safety at induction

General staff responsibility

- The designated member of staff for child protection is aware of child protection and safeguarding procedures
- All staff if unsure will raise their concerns to the designated safeguarding officer, in an emergency or a genuine concern the appropriate action has not been taken, staff can speak directly to children's social care.
- The SENCO has responsibility for coordinating action within the Pre School and liaising with other agencies
- Designated members of staff for child protection will undergo update child protection training
- All staff, on arrival, should receive essential Safeguarding information – relevant to the Pre School so that they are clear how concerns must be reported. Further training takes place as outlined below:
- Staff should be alert to signs of abuse and know to whom they should report any concerns or suspicions to
- Procedures (of which all staff are aware) for handling suspected cases of abuse of children, including procedures to be followed if a child harms another child or a member of staff is accused of abuse, or suspected of abuse
- A Designated Safeguarding Lead for Child Protection (referred to in 'Keeping Children Safe in Education as 'Designated Safeguarding Lead') should have responsibility for co-ordinating action within the Pre School and liaising with other agencies.

-Designated Safeguarding Leads undergo updated child protection training every two years. The DSL and all members of staff are provided with regular updated child protection training in line with advice from the LSCB (Annually).

-All staff will receive regular safeguarding training and child protection updates as required, on a regular basis, to provide them with the relevant skills and knowledge to safeguard children effectively, considering local context. The Pre School should keep a central register of all staff training relating to safeguarding and child protection.

-All staff aware of any child they recognize who will benefit from an Early Help

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

-All staff should be aware of the process for making referrals to local authority children's social care and statutory assessments under the children's act 1989, especially section 17 (children in need) and section 47 (a child suffering, or likely to suffer significant harm) that may follow a referral, along with the role they might be expected to play in such assessments.

-All staff should know what to do if a child tells them if they are being abused, exploited, or neglected. Staff should know how to manage the requirements to maintain an appropriate level of confidentiality. This means only involving those who need to be involved, such as a designated safeguarding lead and local authority children's social care. Staff should never promise a child they will not tell anyone about a report of any form of abuse, as this may not be ultimately not be in the best interests of a child.

-All staff should be able to reassure victims that they are taken seriously, and 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/neglect, nor should a victim ever be made to feel ashamed.

-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 that they may not recognize their experience as harmful, 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 DSL if they have concerns about a child.

The responsibilities placed on proprietors include:

-Ensuring that an effective child protection policy is in place and reviewed annually, together with a staff behaviour policy (code of conduct) and that these are provided to all staff – including temporary staff and volunteers – on induction and that staff are kept up to date with change.

-Contributing to inter-agency working, which includes providing a coordinated offer of early help when additional needs of children are identified.

-Appointing a Designated Safeguarding Lead for child protection who should undergo refresher child protection training every two years.

-Ensuring that the Pre School create a culture of safe recruitment and, as part of that, adopt recruitment procedures that help deter, reject, or identify people who might abuse children

-Ensuring that the Pre School keeps an up-to-date single central record of all staff and volunteers and the dates of all appropriate safeguarding checks.

-Monitoring the adequacy of resources committed to child protection, and the staff training profile.

-Recognising that neither it, nor individual person, have a role in pursuing or managing the processes associated with individual cases of child protection, nor a right to know details of such cases, except when exercising their disciplinary functions in respect of allegations against staff

-Making sure that the child protection policy is available to parents on request.

-Prioritising the welfare of children and young people and creating a culture where staff are confident to challenge senior leaders over any safeguarding concerns.

-Giving consideration as to how children may be taught about safeguarding, including online, through teaching and learning opportunities, as part of providing a broad and balanced curriculum.

-Child Protection Policy, behaviour policy (bullying) staff behaviour policy sometimes called code of conduct, should 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

-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 at induction. The training should be regularly updated for examples via email, e-bulletins, and staff meeting, as required, and at least annually, to continue to provide them with relevant skills and knowledge to safeguard children effectively.

Any staff who joins the Pre School mid-year should receive relevant training on induction. This will form part of their induction pack along with relevant safeguarding policies and local content. The new staff will also be trained on how to record and report any safeguarding/wellbeing concern.

Staff Induction, Awareness and Training:

-All staff to undergo safeguarding and child Protection training at induction.

-All staff will receive regular safeguarding and Child Protection updates, including online safety, eg via email, e-bulletins, staff meetings

-All members of staff have been provided with a copy of Part One of "Keeping Children Safe in Education" which covers Safeguarding information for all staff. Pre School leaders will read the entire document. Pre School leaders and all members of staff who work directly with children will access Annex A within Keeping Children Safe in Education. Members of staff have signed to confirm that they have read and understood Part One and Annex A. This is kept with the DSL and on the Single Central Record.

-The DSL will ensure that all new staff and volunteers (including temporary staff) are aware of the Pre School's internal safeguarding processes.

-All staff members (including temporary staff) will receive training to ensure they are aware of a range of safeguarding issues.

-All staff members (including temporary staff) will receive regular safeguarding and child protection updates, at least annually.

-All staff members (including temporary staff) will be made aware of the Pre Schools expectations regarding safe and professional practice via the staff code of conduct and Acceptable Use Policy.

-Training is provided throughout the year to staff during their professional development meetings.

-Regular Safeguarding emails are sent to all staff with any safeguarding updates.

-Safeguarding posters are placed around the Pre School in areas staff can see, this continues to help support and back up their safeguarding knowledge.

-Leaflets are provided to staff and are kept in the staff room to support with relevant safeguarding topics.

Safer Recruitment

Recruitment and selection process

This part sets out the legal requirements "must do" what they should do, what is considered best practice and import information

The selection process should focus on potential applicants are given the right message about the Pre Schools commitment to recruit suitable people. It is vital that the whole Pre Schools approach to safeguarding create a culture that safeguards and promote the welfare of all children, to ensure a robust recruitment procedure, to deter and prevent unsuitable people applying for secure employment and volunteering opportunities.

Those involved with the recruitment and employment process must of received appropriate training.

Recruitment and Selection Process

Little Stars Pre School

This section focuses on ensuring potential applicants are given the right messages about the commitment to recruit suitable people.

It is vital that as part of their whole Pre School approach to safeguarding, creates a culture that safeguards and promotes the welfare of children in their Pre School. As part of this culture, it is important that they adopt robust recruitment procedures that deter and prevent people who are unsuitable to work with children from applying for or securing employment, or volunteering opportunities.

Proprietors should ensure that those involved with the recruitment and employment of staff to work with children have received appropriate safer recruitment training.

The Pre School Staffing (England) Regulations 2009 and the Education (Pupil Referral Units) (Application of Enactments) (England) Regulations 2007. require proprietors of maintained settings and management committees of pupil referral units (PRUs) to ensure that at least one of the persons who conducts an interview has completed safer recruitment training.

Advert

Little Stars Pre School must think about the including the following information when defining the role (through the job or role description and person specification)

- The skills, abilities, experience, attitude, and behaviours required for the post
- The safeguarding requirements ie what extent the role will involve contact with children and will they be engaging in regulated activity relevant to children
- The Pre Schools commitment to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and make clear that safeguarding checks will be undertaken
- The safeguarding responsibilities of the post as per the job description and personal specification
- Whether the post is exempt from Rehabilitation of Offenders Act (ROA)1974. The amendments to the ROA 1974 (Exceptions Order 1975, (amended 2013 and 2020)) provide that when applying for certain jobs and activities, certain spent convictions and cautions are 'protected', so they do not need to be disclosed to employers, and if they are disclosed, employers cannot take them into account. The MOJ's guidance on the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 and the Exceptions Order 1975, provides information about which convictions must be declared during job applications and related exceptions and further information about filtering offences can be found in the DBS filtering guide. Further information will be sought on employment of ex-offenders

Application Forms

Where a role involves engaging in regulated activity relevant to children, the setting will include a statement in the application form or elsewhere in the information provided to applicants that it is an offence to apply for the role if the applicant is barred from engaging in regulated activity relevant to children.

A copy of the Child Protection Policy will be provided.

Applicants are required to provide:

- personal details, current and former names, current address and national insurance number
- details of their present (or last) employment and reason for leaving
- full employment history, (since leaving school, including education, employment and voluntary work) including reasons for any gaps in employment
- qualifications, the awarding body and date of award

- details of referees/references and
- a statement of the personal qualities and experience that the applicant believes are relevant to their suitability for the post advertised and how they meet the person specification.
- Curriculum vitae should only be accepted alongside an application form. A curriculum vitae on its own will not provide adequate information.

Shortlisting

Shortlisted candidates should be asked to complete a self-declaration of their criminal record or information that would make them unsuitable to work with children. Self-declaration is subject to Ministry of Justice guidance on the disclosure of criminal records, further information can be found on [GOV.UK https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/new-guidance-on-the-rehabilitation-of-offenders-act-1974](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/new-guidance-on-the-rehabilitation-of-offenders-act-1974)

For example:

- if they have a criminal history
- if they are included on the children's barred list
- if they are prohibited from teaching
- if they are prohibited from taking part in the management of an independent school
- information about any criminal offences committed in any country in line with the law as applicable in England and Wales, not the law in their country of origin or where they were convicted
- if they are known to the police and children's local authority social care
- if they have been disqualified from providing childcare (see Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025), and,
- any relevant overseas information.

This information should only be requested from applicants who have been shortlisted. The information should not be requested in the application form to decide who should be shortlisted.

Applicants should be asked to sign a declaration confirming the information they have provided is true. Where there is an electronic signature, the shortlisted candidate should physically sign a hard copy of the application at point of interview. The purpose of a self-declaration is so that candidates will have the opportunity to share relevant information and allow this to be discussed and considered at interview before the DBS certificate is received.

The Pre School should:

- ensure that at least two people carry out the shortlisting exercise (it is recommended that those who shortlist carry out the interview for a consistent approach)
- consider any inconsistencies and look for gaps in employment and reasons given for them, and,
- explore all potential concerns.

In addition, as part of the shortlisting process, should consider carrying out an online search as part of their due diligence on the shortlisted candidates. This may help identify any incidents or issues that have happened, and are publicly available online, which might want to explore with the applicant at interview. The Pre School must inform shortlisted candidates that online searches may be done as part of due diligence checks. Legislation and the Law for information on data protection and UK GDPR.

Employment history and References

The purpose of seeking references is to allow employers to obtain factual information to support appointment decisions. References should be obtained before interview, where possible, this allows any concerns raised to be explored further with the referee and taken up with the candidate at interview

The Pre School will not

- not accept open references e.g. to whom it may concern
- not rely on applicants to obtain their reference
- ensure any references are from the candidate's current employer and have been completed by a senior person with appropriate authority (if the referee is school or college based, the reference should be confirmed by the proprietor as accurate in respect of any disciplinary investigations)
- obtain verification of the individual's most recent relevant period of employment where the applicant is not currently employed secure a reference from the relevant employer from the last time the applicant worked with children (if not currently working with children), if the applicant has never worked with children, then ensure a reference from their current employer
- always verify any information with the person who provided the reference
- ensure electronic references originate from a legitimate source
- contact referees to clarify content where information is vague or insufficient information is provided
- compare the information on the application form with that in the reference and take up any discrepancies with the candidate
- establish the reason for the candidate leaving their current or most recent post, and,
- ensure any concerns are resolved satisfactorily before appointment is confirmed.

When asked to provide references, the Pre School should ensure the information confirms whether they are satisfied with the applicant's suitability to work with children and provide the facts (not opinions) of any substantiated safeguarding concerns/allegations that meet the harm threshold. They should not include information about concerns/allegations which are unsubstantiated, unfounded, false, or malicious. Further guidance on references, including on the position regarding low-level concerns, is set out in Part four. References are an important part of the recruitment process and should be provided in a timely manner and not hold up proceedings. Any repeated concerns or allegations which do not meet the harm threshold which have all been found to be false, unfounded, unsubstantiated or malicious should not be included in any reference.

Selection

A range of selection techniques to identify the most suitable person for the post. Those interviewing should agree structured questions, which should include:

-Finding out what attracted the candidate to the post being applied for and their motivation to work with children

-Exploring their skills and asking examples of experience of working with children which are relevant to their role.

-Probing any gaps in employment or where the candidate has changed employment or location, asking the reason for this.

The interviews should be used to explore potential areas of concern and to determine the applicant's suitability to work with children. Areas that may be concerning and lead to further probing include:

- implication that adults and children are equal
- lack of recognition and/or understanding of the vulnerability of children
- inappropriate idealisation of children
- inadequate understanding of appropriate boundaries between adults and children, and,
- indicators of negative safeguarding behaviours.

Any information about past disciplinary action or substantiated allegations should be considered in the circumstances of the individual case.

Children should be involved in the recruitment process in a meaningful way. Observing short listed candidates and appropriately supervised interaction with children is common and recognised as good practice.

All information considered in decision making should be clearly recorded along with decisions made.

We endeavour to ensure that all staff working within the Pre School are suitable. This entails scrutinising applicants, verifying their identity including name change, best practice is checking names on birth certificates, qualifications and obtaining references in addition to an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks. Verify the candidates mental and physical fitness to carry out their work responsibilities., which can be asked in the application form at first stages id checks, Rights to work in the UK. We ensure at least one member of every staff recruitment has received Safer Recruitment training. Some interview questions must relate to safeguarding matters. (DFE guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025). **All** adults in the Pre School receive regular training to raise their awareness of safeguarding issues and to improve their knowledge of safeguarding procedures and referral system. Safer Recruiting training for appropriate staff is always available and should be updated every three years.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/identity-proofing-and-verification-of-an-individual>
<https://www.gov.uk/check-job-applicant-right-to-work>

Pre-appointment vetting checks, regulated activity and recording information

This section provides the legal requirements that proprietors need to understand (and which **must** be carried out) when appointing individuals to engage in regulated activity relating to children. It covers the importance of ensuring the correct pre-appointment checks are carried out. These checks will help identify whether a person may be unsuitable to work with children (and in some cases is legally prohibited from working with children and/or working). These checks should be seen as part of the wider whole Pre School safeguarding regime, which will continue following appointment. This section also explains what information **must** record on the single central record.

Some safer recruitment regulations do not apply to these providers and as such some of the “musts” for colleges do not apply to them. These checks are an essential part of safeguarding, carried out to help employers check the suitability of candidates. Therefore, the providers set out above should carry out these pre-appointment checks.

All offers of appointment should be conditional until satisfactory completion of the **mandatory pre-employment checks**. The Pre School must:

-verify a candidates identity, it is important to be sure that the person is who they claim to be, this includes being aware of the potential for individuals changing their name. Best practice is checking the name on their birth certificate, where this is available. Further identification checking guidelines can be found on the [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) website.

-obtain (via the applicant) an enhanced DBS check (including children's barred list information, for those who will be engaging in regulated activity with children). Note that when using the DBS update service, you still need to obtain the original physical certificate

-obtain a separate children's barred list check if an individual will start work in regulated activity with children before the DBS certificate is available;

-verify the candidate's mental and physical fitness to carry out their work responsibilities. A job applicant can be asked relevant questions about disability and health in order to establish whether they have the physical and mental capacity for the specific role.

--verify the person's right to work in the UK, including EU nationals. If there is uncertainty about whether an individual needs permission to work in the UK, follow advice on the [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) website

-if the person has lived or worked outside the UK, make any further checks the Pre School consider appropriate and,

-verify professional qualifications, as appropriate. The Teaching Regulation Agency's (TRA) Employer Access Service should be used to verify any award of qualified teacher status (QTS), and the completion of teacher induction or probation.

In addition:

-independent schools, including academies and free schools, **must** check that a person taking up a management position as described is not subject to a section 128 direction made by the Secretary of State

-all Pre Schools **must** ensure that an applicant to be employed to carry out teaching work is not subject to a prohibition order issued by the Secretary of State for prohibition checks or any sanction or restriction imposed

-before employing a person to carry out work in relation to children, reasonable steps to establish whether that person is subject to a prohibition order issued by the Secretary of State

-all Pre Schools providing childcare **must** ensure that appropriate checks are carried out to ensure that individuals employed to work in reception classes, or in wraparound care for children up to the age of 8, are not disqualified from working in these settings under the 2018 Childcare Disqualification Regulations.

The Single Central Record must be updated regularly and all staff and volunteers should be entered onto the system. This will be then checked regularly. All associated evidence and documentation remains the responsibility of the Directors.

The single central record must cover the following people:

All staff who work at the Pre School.

The single central record must indicate whether the following checks have been carried out or certificates obtained, and the date on which each check was completed/certificate obtained:

- an identity check - Identification checking guidelines can be found on the [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) website;
- a barred list check;
- an enhanced DBS check/certificate.
- a prohibition from teaching check;

- further checks on people who have lived or worked outside the this would include recording checks for those European Economic Area (EEA) teacher sanctions and restrictions
- a check of professional qualifications, where required; and
- a check to establish the person's right to work in the United Kingdom.

For agency and third party supply staff, must also include whether written confirmation has been received that the employment business supplying the member of supply staff has carried out the relevant checks and obtained the appropriate certificates, and the date that confirmation was received and whether any enhanced DBS certificate check has been provided in respect of the member of staff.

"Whilst there is no statutory duty to include on the single central record details of any other checks, nurseries are free to record any other information they deem relevant. For example, checks for childcare disqualification, volunteers, and safeguarding and safer recruitment training dates"

The single central record will be kept in electronic form.

Agency and third-party staff (supply staff)

-Written notification must be obtained from any agency, or third- party organisation they use that the organisation has carried out the checks (in respect of the enhanced DBS certificate, written notification that confirms the certificate has been obtained by either the employment business or another such business), on an individual who will be working at the site would otherwise perform.

-Where the position requires a barred list check, this must be obtained by the agency or third party prior to appointing the individual. The Pre School must also check that the person presenting themselves for work is the same person on whom the checks have been made.

Trainee/Students

Where applicants for initial teacher training or in Early Years must ensure that all necessary checks are carried out. As trainee's are likely to be engaging in regulated activity, an enhanced DBS certificate (including barred list information) must be obtained.

Where trainee are fee-funded, it is the responsibility of the initial training provider to carry out the necessary checks. Written confirmation must be obtained from the provider that it has carried out all pre-appointment checks that the provision would otherwise be required to perform, and that the trainee has been judged by the provider to be suitable to work with children.

Existing staff

If Little Stars as a provision have concerns about an existing staff member's suitability to work with children, the provision should carry out all relevant checks as if the person were a new member of staff. Similarly, if a person working at the provision moves from a post that was not regulated activity into work which is considered to be regulated activity, the relevant checks for that regulated activity must be carried out. An individual moving from a position that did not involve the provision of education to one that does must be treated as if that individual were a new member of staff and all required pre-appointment checks must be carried out. Apart from these circumstances, the provision is not required to request a DBS check or barred list check.

Little Stars and any education establishment has a legal duty to refer to the DBS anyone who has harmed, or poses a risk of harm, to a child or vulnerable adult where:

- **the harm test is satisfied in respect of that individual;**

- **the individual has received a caution or conviction for a relevant offence, or if there is reason to believe that the individual has committed a listed relevant offence; and the individual has been removed from working (paid or unpaid) in regulated activity, or would have been removed had they not left.**

The DBS will consider whether to bar the person. Detailed guidance on when to refer to the DBS, and what information must be provided, can be found on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).

Referrals should be made as soon as possible, and ordinarily on conclusion of an investigation, when an individual is removed from regulated activity. This could include when an individual is suspended, redeployed to work that is not regulated activity, dismissed or when they have resigned. When an allegation is made, an investigation should be carried out to gather enough evidence to establish if it has foundation, and employers should ensure they have sufficient information to meet the referral duty criteria explained in the DBS referral guidance, which can be found on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).

Where an employer, including an agency, dismisses or ceases to use the services of an employee 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, as required by sections 141D and 141E of the Education Act 2002. The Secretary of State may investigate the case, and if s/he finds there is a case to answer, must then decide whether to make a prohibition order in respect of the person. How to refer can be found on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).

Volunteers

Under no circumstances should a volunteer in respect of whom no checks have been obtained be left unsupervised or allowed to work in regulated activity. Volunteers who, on an unsupervised basis, must not look after children regularly, or provide personal care on a one-off basis, will be in regulated activity. We as a provision would obtain an enhanced DBS certificate (which should include barred list information) for all volunteers who are new to working in regulated activity. Existing volunteers in regulated activity do not have to be re-checked if they have already had a DBS check (which includes barred list information). However, we may conduct a repeat DBS check (which should include barred list information) on any such volunteer should they have concerns.

There are certain circumstances where we may obtain an enhanced DBS certificate (not including barred list information), for volunteers who are not engaging in regulated activity. This is set out in DBS workforce guides, which can be found on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk). Employers are not legally permitted to request barred list information on a supervised volunteer as they are not considered to be engaged in regulated activity. We at Little Stars would undertake a risk assessment and use professional judgement and experience when deciding whether to obtain an enhanced DBS certificate for any volunteer not engaging in regulated activity. In doing so they should consider:

- the nature of the work with children.
- what the establishment knows about the volunteer, including formal or informal information offered by staff, parents and other volunteers;
- whether the volunteer has other employment or undertakes voluntary activities where referees can advise on suitability.
- whether the role is eligible for an enhanced DBS check. Details of the risk assessment should be recorded.

It is for us as a provision to determine whether a volunteer is considered to be supervised. In making this decision, and where an individual is supervised, to help determine the appropriate level of supervision must have regard to the statutory guidance issued by the Secretary of State. This guidance requires that, for a person to be considered supervised, the supervision must be:

- by a person who is in regulated activity;

- regular and day to day; and
- “Reasonable in all the circumstances to ensure the protection of children.”

The DBS cannot provide barred list information on any person, including volunteers, who are not in, or seeking to engage in regulated activity.

Visitors

Provisions do not have the power to request DBS checks and barred list checks, or ask to see DBS certificates, for visitors (for example children’s relatives or other visitors attending a sports day). Management should use their professional judgment about the need to escort or supervise visitors.

Disqualification by Association

By amendment of Regulation 9 of the Childcare Regulation 2018, disqualification by association rules are removed for Pre Schools. **However**, all staff are expected to inform the Pre School-DSL immediately where their relationships and associations, both within and outside of the workplace (including online), may have implications for the safeguarding of children in the Pre School.

For staff who work in childcare provision or who are directly concerned with the management of such provision, the provision needs to ensure that appropriate checks are carried out to ensure that individuals are not disqualified under the Childcare (Disqualification) Regulations 2018. Further information on the staff to whom these regulations apply, the checks that should be carried out, and the recording of those checks can be found in [Disqualification under the Childcare Act 2006](#) statutory guidance.

Any offer of appointment made to a successful candidate, including one who has lived or worked abroad, must be conditional on satisfactory completion of the necessary pre-employment checks.

When appointing new staff, the setting must:

- Check on the [GOV.UK](#) website; if the person has lived or worked outside the UK, make any further checks, and consider appropriate
- Verify a candidate’s identity. Identification checking guidelines can be found on the [GOV.UK](#) website;
- Obtain (via the applicant) an enhanced DBS certificate (including barred list information, for those who will be engaging in regulated activity);
- Obtain a separate barred list check if an individual will start work in regulated activity before the DBS certificate is available.
- Verify the candidate’s mental and physical fitness to carry out their work responsibilities. A job applicant can be asked relevant questions about disability and health in order to establish whether they have the physical and mental capacity for the specific role;
- Verify the person’s right to work in the UK. If there is uncertainty about whether an individual needs permission to work in the UK, then prospective employers, or volunteer managers, should follow advice on the [GOV.UK](#) website;
- Verify professional qualifications, as appropriate.

On receipt, references should be checked to ensure that all specific questions have been answered satisfactorily, and the candidates suitability to work with children, and provide the facts not opinions of any substantiated safeguarding concerns/allegations which are unsubstantiated, unfounded false or malicious. The referee should be contacted to provide further clarification as appropriate, for example if the answers are vague or if insufficient information is provided. They should also be compared for consistency with the information provided by the candidate on their application form. Any discrepancies should be taken up with the candidate.

Any information about past disciplinary action or allegations that are disclosed should be considered carefully when assessing the applicant's suitability for the post (including information obtained from the Teacher Services' checks referred to previously). Further help and advice can be found on the [Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service \(ACAS\) website](#).

Childcare disqualification is an additional requirement to the general child safeguarding arrangements provided under the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) regime, which apply to all children. The childcare disqualification arrangements apply to staff working with young children in childcare settings, including primary schools, nurseries and other registered settings, such as childcare provision on college sites. The arrangements predominantly apply to individuals working with children aged 5 and under, including reception classes, but also apply to those working in wraparound care for children up to the age of 8, such as breakfast clubs and after school care. For staff who work in childcare provision, or who are directly concerned with the management of such provision, employers need to ensure that appropriate checks are carried out to ensure that individuals are not disqualified under the [Childcare Disqualification Regulations 2018](#). Further information on the staff to whom these Regulations apply, the checks that should be carried out, and the recording of those checks can be found in statutory guidance [Disqualification under the Childcare Act 2006](#).

Individuals who have lived or worked outside the UK

Individuals who have lived or worked outside the UK **must** undergo the same checks, this includes

- An enhanced DBS check

- Criminal record check for overseas applicants, Home Office guidance

- Obtaining a letter via the applicant from the professional regulating authority (this is often the Department/Ministry of Education but varies across the world) in the country (or countries) in which the applicant has worked confirming that they have not imposed any sanctions or restrictions, and or that they are aware of any reason why they may be unsuitable to teach. Applicants can find contact details of regulatory bodies in the EU/EEA and Switzerland on the [Regulated Professions database](#). Whilst the safeguarding and qualified teacher status (QTS) processes are different it is likely that this information will be obtained from the same place, therefore applicants can also contact the [UK Centre for Professional Qualifications](#) who will signpost them to the appropriate EEA regulatory body.

Where available such evidence can be considered together with information obtained through other pre-appointment to check to help assess their suitability

Where this information is not available the setting should seek alternative methods of checking suitability and or undertake a risk assessment that supports informed decision making on whether to proceed with the appointment. Although sanctions and restrictions imposed by another regulating authority do not prevent a person from taking up teaching positions in England, the information should consider the circumstances that led to the restriction or sanction being imposed when considering a candidate's suitability for employment. Further information can be found in DfE Guidance: [Recruit teachers from overseas](#)

. Not all countries provide criminal record information, and where they do, the nature and detail of the information provided varies from country to country. The setting should also be mindful that the criteria for disclosing offences in other countries often have a different threshold than those in the UK. The Home Office provides guidance on criminal records checks for overseas applicants which can be found on [GOV.UK](#).

Some overseas qualified teachers can apply to the TRA for the award of qualified teacher status (QTS) in England. More information about this is available [here](#). It is important to note that holding a teaching qualification (wherever it was obtained) does not provide suitable assurances for

safeguarding purposes that an individual has not been found guilty of any wrongdoing or misconduct, and or is suitable to work with children.

Agency and third party staff (supply staff)

Little Stars as a provision **must** obtain written notification from any agency, or third party organisation, that they have carried out the checks on an individual who will be working at the setting that would otherwise perform. In respect of the enhanced DBS check, the setting **must** ensure that written notification confirms the certificate has been obtained by either the employment business or another such business.

Where the agency or organisation has obtained an enhanced DBS certificate before the person is due to begin work, which has disclosed any matter or information, or any information was provided to the employment business, the setting **must** obtain a copy of the certificate from the agency. Where the position requires a children's barred list check this must be obtained by the agency or third party by obtaining an enhanced DBS certificate with children's barred list information, prior to appointing the individual. The setting should also check that the person presenting themselves for work is the same person on whom the checks have been made.

Volunteers / Students / Trainees

Keeping in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025, all volunteers must have a risk assessment to ascertain the level of support and DBS required

The risk assessment should consider:

- the nature of the work with children, especially if regulated activity, including level of supervision
- what the establishment knows about the volunteer, including formal or informal information offered by staff, parents and other volunteers
- whether the volunteer has other employment or undertakes other voluntary activity, where referees can advise on their suitability
- whether their role is eligible for a DBS check and if so then the level of check

Under no circumstances should a volunteer on whom no checks have been obtained be left unsupervised or allowed to work in regulated activity

DBS checks should be carried if the volunteer attends regular day to day activity relating to children and reasonable in all the circumstances to ensure the protection of the children

Whilst volunteers play an important role and are often seen by children as being safe and trustworthy adults, the nature of voluntary roles varies, we as a provision should undertake a written risk assessment and use professional judgement and experience when deciding what checks, if any, are required.

Student / Trainees must have all necessary checks carried out, including an enhanced DBS check, including children's barred list check.

The risk assessment should consider:

- the nature of the work with children, especially if it will constitute regulated activity, including the level of supervision
- what the establishment knows about the volunteer, including formal or informal information offered by staff, parents and other volunteers
- whether the volunteer has other employment or undertakes voluntary activities where referees can advise on their suitability

- whether the role is eligible for a DBS check, and if it is, the level of the check, for volunteer roles that are not in regulated activity.

Details of the risk assessment should be recorded.

Contractors

Contractors engaging in regulated activity relating to children will require an enhanced DBS check. Under no circumstances should a contractor on whom no checks have been obtained be allowed to work unsupervised or engage in regulated activity relating to children.

If an individual working within the provision is self-employed, Little Stars would require obtaining the DBS check, of an appropriate level of DBS check, contractors engaging in regulated activity relating to children will require a enhanced DBS check, including children's barred list information. (as self-employed people are not able to make an application directly to the DBS on their own account)

DBS Update Service

Individuals can join the DBS Update Service at the point that an application for a new DBS check is made. Subscription to the service enables future status checks to be carried out by employers to confirm that no new information has been added to the check since its issue.

As good practice, many require new staff to join the Update Service as part of their employment contract. The benefits of joining the Update Service are:

-portability of a DBS check across employers

-free online checks to identify whether there has been any change to the information recorded, since the initial certificate was issued and advice whether the individual should apply for a new DBS check, and,

-that individuals will be able to see a full list of those organisations that have carried out a status check on their account.

Before using the Update Service, the Pre School **must**:

-obtain consent from the individual to carry out an online check to view the status of an existing standard or enhanced DBS check

-confirm the DBS certificate matches the individual's identity

-examine the original certificate to ensure that it is valid for employment with the childrens workforce, and,

-ensure that the level of the check is appropriate to the job they are applying for, e.g. enhanced DBS check/enhanced DBS check including with barred list information.

Further information about the Update Service, including when updated information can be used, can be found on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).

Referrals should be made as soon as possible, when an individual is removed from regulated activity. This could include when an individual is suspended, redeployed to work that is not regulated activity,
Little Stars Pre School

dismissed or when they have resigned. It is important that as much relevant information is provided to the DBS as possible, as it relies on the quality of information provided by the setting when considering the referral is made.

How to ensure the ongoing safeguarding of children and the legal reporting duties on employers

This section explains the importance of safeguarding vigilance beyond the recruitment process and as part of the Pre school approach to safeguarding. Safer recruitment is not just about carrying out the right DBS checks. Similarly safeguarding should not be limited to recruitment procedures. Good safeguarding requires a continuing commitment from proprietors, and all staff to ensure the safety and welfare of children is embedded in all of the organisation's processes and procedures, and consequentially enshrined in its ethos.

Ongoing vigilance for all staff

Proprietors should ensure they have processes in place for continuous vigilance, maintaining an environment that deters and prevents abuse and challenges inappropriate behaviour. To support this, it is important that leaders create the right culture and environment so that staff feel comfortable to discuss matters both within, and where it is appropriate, outside of the workplace (including online), which may have implications for the safeguarding of children. As set out in Part one, Part two and Part four of Keeping Children Safe in education 2025 the guidance it is important that all staff understand the process and procedures to follow if they have a safeguarding concern about another staff member. This can assist employers to support staff, where there is a need, and help them manage children's safety and welfare, potentially providing them with information that will help them consider whether there are further measures or changes to procedures that need to be put in place to safeguard children in their care.

Existing staff

There are limited circumstances where schools and colleges will need to carry out new checks on existing staff. These are when:

- an individual working at the setting moves from a post that was not regulated activity with children into work which is considered to be regulated activity with children. In such circumstances, the relevant checks for that regulated activity **must** be carried out
- there has been a break in service of 12 weeks or more, or
- there are concerns about an individual's suitability to work with children.

Duty to refer to the Disclosure and Barring Service

When an allegation is made an investigation should be carried out to gather enough evidence to establish if it has foundation, and employers should ensure they have sufficient information to meet the referral duty criteria explained in the DBS referral guidance, which can be found on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk). There is a legal requirement to make a referral to the DBS where they remove an individual from regulated activity (or would have removed an individual had they not left), and they believe the individual has:

- engaged in relevant conduct in relation to children and/or adults, and/or
- satisfied the harm test in relation to children and/or vulnerable adults, and/or
- been cautioned or convicted of a relevant (automatic barring either with or without the right to make representations) offence.

The DBS will consider whether to bar the person. Detailed guidance on when to refer to the DBS (including what is the harm test and relevant conduct), and what information **must** be provided, can be found on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).

Referrals should be made as soon as possible when an individual is removed from regulated activity. This could include when an individual is suspended, redeployed to work that is not regulated activity, dismissed or when they have resigned. It is important that as much relevant information is provided to the DBS as possible, as it relies on the quality of information provided by the school or college when considering the referral.

Safeguarding concerns or allegations made about staff, including supply teachers, volunteers and contractors

This part has two sections covering the two levels of concerns and allegations:

1. Concerns/allegations that **may** meet the harm threshold.
2. Concerns/allegations that **do not** meet the harm threshold—referred to for the purposes of this guidance as ‘low-level concerns’.

These procedures should be consistent with local safeguarding procedures and practice guidance.

Section one: Concerns or allegations that may meet the harm threshold

This part of the guidance is about managing cases of concerns/allegations that might indicate a person may pose a risk of harm if they continue to work in their present position, or in any capacity with children within a setting. In this part reference is made to ‘**allegation**’ for ease. This part of the guidance should be followed where it is alleged that anyone working in the any setting that provides education for persons under 18 years of age, including all staff, supply staff, volunteers and contractors has:

- **behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child and/or**
- **possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child, and/or**
- **behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates he or she may pose a risk of harm to children, and/or**
- **behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children.**

The last bullet point above includes behaviour that may have happened outside of a setting environment that might make an individual unsuitable to work with children, this is known as transferable risk.

Where appropriate, an assessment of transferable risk to children with whom the person works should be undertaken. If in doubt seek advice from the local authority designated officer (LADO).

It is important that policies and procedures make clear to whom allegations should be reported and that this should be done without delay. A “case manager” will lead any investigation. This may be the manager, or, where the manager is the subject of an allegation, the deputy

The initial response to an allegation

Where the Pre School identifies that a child has been harmed, that there may be an immediate risk of harm to a child or if the situation is an emergency, they should contact local authority children’s social care and as appropriate the police immediately as per the processes explained in Part one of KCSiE 2025 guidance.

There are two aspects to consider when an allegation is made:

- **Looking after the welfare of the child** - the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) is responsible for ensuring that the child is not at risk and referring cases of suspected abuse to the local authority children's social care as described in Part one of this guidance.
- **Investigating and supporting the person subject to the allegation** - the case manager should discuss with the LADO, the nature, content and context of the allegation, and agree a course of action.

When dealing with allegations, the Pre School should:

- apply common sense and judgement
- deal with allegations quickly, fairly and consistently, and
- provide effective protection for the child and support the person subject to the allegation.

The Pre School should ensure they understand the local authority arrangements for managing allegations, including the contact details and what information the LADO will require when an allegation is made. Before contacting the LADO, the Pre School should conduct basic enquiries in line with local procedures to establish the facts and to help them determine whether there is any foundation to the allegation, being careful not to jeopardise any future police investigation. For example whether:

- the individual was in the setting at the time of the allegations
- the individual did or could have come into contact with the child
- there were any witnesses, and
- there is any CCTV footage

These are just a sample of example questions. The Pre School should be familiar with what initial information the LADO will require. This information can be found in local policy and procedural guidance provided by the LADO service.

When to inform the individual of the allegation should be considered carefully on a case-by-case basis, with guidance as required from the LADO, and if appropriate local authority children's social care and the police.

If there is cause to suspect a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer significant harm, a strategy discussion involving the police and/or local authority children's social care will be convened in accordance with the statutory guidance [Working Together to Safeguard Children](#). If the allegation is about physical contact, for example restraint, the strategy discussion or initial evaluation with the LADO should take into account that staff are entitled to use reasonable force to control or restrain children in certain circumstances, including dealing with disruptive behaviour. Further information about the use of reasonable force can be found within this policy and on [GOV.UK](#).

Where the case manager is concerned about the welfare of other children in the community or the member of staff's family, they should discuss these concerns with the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) and make a risk assessment of the situation. It may be necessary for the designated safeguarding lead to make a referral to local authority children's social care.

Where it is clear that an investigation by the police or local authority children's social care is unnecessary, or the strategy discussion or initial assessment decides that is the case, the LADO should discuss the next steps with the case manager.

No further action

Where the initial discussion leads to no further action, the case manager and the LADO should:

- record the decision and justification for it, and
- agree on what information should be put in writing to the individual concerned and by whom.

Further enquiries

Where further enquiries are required to enable a decision about how to proceed, the LADO and case manager should discuss how and by whom the investigation will be the Pre School when considering allegations against adults working with children. The role of the LADO is not to investigate the allegation, but to ensure that an appropriate investigation is carried out, whether that is by the police, local authority children's social care, the school or college, or a combination of these. In straightforward cases, the investigation should normally be undertaken by a senior member of the school or college's staff.

Where there is a lack of appropriate resource within the setting, or the nature or complexity of the allegation requires it, the allegation will require an independent investigator. Many local authorities provide for an independent investigation of allegations for the Pre School that are maintained by the local authority. It is important that local authorities ensure that the setting in that area have access to an affordable facility for independent investigation where that is appropriate.

The case manager should monitor the progress of cases to ensure that they are dealt with as quickly as possible in a thorough and fair process. Wherever possible, the first review should take place no later than four weeks after the initial assessment.

Dates for subsequent reviews, ideally at fortnightly (and no longer than monthly) intervals, should be set at the review meeting if the investigation continues.

Supply staff and all contracted staff

In some circumstances the setting will have to consider an allegation against an individual not directly employed by them, where its disciplinary procedures do not fully apply because agencies will have their own policies and procedures; for example, supply staff or contracted staff provided by an employment agency or business.

Whilst the Pre School are not the employer of supply staff, they should ensure allegations are dealt with properly. In no circumstances should the setting decide to cease to use a supply staff due to safeguarding concerns, without finding out the facts and liaising with the LADO to determine a suitable outcome. Proprietors should discuss with the supply agency or agencies where the supply staff is working across a number of settings, whether it is appropriate to suspend the supply staff, or redeploy them to another part of the provision, if possible, whilst they carry out their investigation.

Agencies should be fully involved and co-operate with any enquiries from the LADO, police and/or local authority children's social care. The Pre School will usually take the lead because agencies do not have direct access to children, so they will not be able to collect the facts when an allegation is made, nor do they have all the relevant information required by the LADO as part of the referral process. Supply staff, whilst not employed by the Pre School, are under the supervision, direction and control of the proprietor when working in the setting. They should be advised to contact their trade union representative if they have one, or a colleague for support. The allegations management meeting, which is often arranged by the LADO, should address issues such as information sharing, to ensure that any previous concerns or allegations known to the agency or agencies are considered by the Pre School during the investigation.

When using a supply agency, the Pre School should inform the agency of the process for managing allegations but also take account of the agency's policies and the duty placed on agencies to refer to the DBS as personnel suppliers. This should include inviting the agency's human resource manager or equivalent to meetings and keeping them up to date with information about its policies.

Organisations or Individuals using school premises

The Pre School may receive an allegation relating to an incident that happened when an individual or organisation was using the school premises for the purposes of running activities for children (for example community groups, sports associations, or service providers that run extra-curricular activities, after school club). As with any safeguarding allegation, the Pre School should follow their safeguarding policies and procedures, including informing the LADO.

Suspension

Suspension should not be an automatic response when an allegation is reported. All options to avoid suspension should be considered prior to taking that step. The case manager must consider carefully whether the circumstances warrant suspension from contact with children at the Pre school, until the allegation is resolved. It should be considered only in cases where there is cause to suspect a child or other children that is/are at risk of harm, or the case is so serious that there might be grounds for dismissal. If in doubt, the case manager should seek views from their personnel adviser and the LADO, as well as the police and local authority children's social care where they have been involved.

Where a setting is made aware that the Secretary of State has made an interim prohibition order, in respect of an individual, they should take immediate action to ensure the individual does not carry out work in contravention of the order. This means that pending the findings of the Teaching Regulation Agency (TRA) investigation, the individual must not carry out any type of teaching work.

In many cases, an inquiry can be resolved quickly and without the need for suspension. The employer will decide on whether the individual should continue to work, based on consultation with the LADO who will provide relevant information received from the police or local authority children's social care on whether they have any objections to the member of staff continuing to work during the investigation of the case.

Based on advice a risk analysis drawn up with the LADO, the following alternatives should be considered by the case manager before suspending a member of staff:

- redeployment within the setting so that the individual does not have direct contact with the child or children concerned
- providing an assistant to be present when the individual has contact with children
- redeploying to alternative work in the setting so the individual does not have unsupervised access to children, where possible
- moving the child or children to the other room where they will not come into contact with the member of staff, but this decision should only be made if it is in the best interests of the child or children concerned and takes account of their views. It should be made clear that this is not a punishment and parents have been consulted, or
- temporarily redeploying the member of staff, where possible.

These alternatives allow time for an informed decision regarding the suspension, this will, however, depend upon the nature of the allegation. The case manager should consider the potential permanent professional reputational damage to employees that can result from suspension where an allegation is later found to be unfounded, unsubstantiated, malicious, or false.

If immediate suspension is considered necessary, the case manager should record the rationale and justification for such a course of action. This should also include what alternatives to suspension have been considered and why they were rejected.

Where it has been deemed appropriate to suspend the person, written confirmation should be given within one working day, giving as much detail as appropriate for the reasons for the suspension. It is not acceptable for an employer to leave a person who has been suspended without any support. The person should be informed at the point of their suspension who their named contact is within the organisation and provided with their contact details.

Local authority children's social care or the police may give their view to the LADO but they cannot require the case manager to suspend a member of staff or remove a volunteer, although the case manager should give appropriate weight to their views. The power to suspend is vested in the proprietor who are the employers. However, where a strategy discussion, or initial assessment, concludes that there should be enquiries by local authority children's social care, and/or an investigation by the police, the LADO should canvass police and local authority children's social care for views about whether the accused member of staff should be suspended from contact with children. Police involvement does not make it mandatory to suspend a member of staff; this decision should be taken on a case-by-case basis having undertaken a risk assessment about whether the person poses a risk of harm to children.

Supporting those involved - Duty of care

The welfare of a child is paramount and this will be the prime concern in terms of investigating an allegation against a person in a position of trust. However, when an allegation or safeguarding concern is being investigated it is likely to be a very stressful experience for the adult subject to the investigation, and potentially for their family members. It is important that an employer offers appropriate welfare support at such a time and recognises the sensitivity of the situation. Information is confidential and should not ordinarily be shared with other staff or with children or parents who are not directly involved in the investigation.

Employers have a duty of care to their employees. They should:

- manage and minimise the stress caused by the allegation
- inform the individual as soon as possible, explaining the likely course of action, guided by the LADO, and the police where necessary
- advise the individual to contact their trade union representative, or a colleague for support
- appoint a named representative to keep the person informed about the progress of the case
- provide access to counselling or medical advice where appropriate.
- not prevent social contact with work colleagues and friends, when staff are suspended, unless there is evidence to suggest this may prejudice the gathering of evidence.

Parents or carers of the child or children involved should be:

- formally told about the allegation as soon as possible. The case manager should consult the LADO and where involved, local authority children's social care and/or the police on what information can be disclosed
- kept informed about the progress of the case, only in relation to their child - no information can be shared regarding the staff member, and

- made aware of the requirement to maintain confidentiality and unwanted publicity about any allegations made against staff whilst investigations are in progress as set out in section 141F of the Education Act 2002.

Confidentiality and Information sharing

In an allegations management meeting or during the initial assessment of the case, the agencies involved should share all relevant information they have about the person who is the subject of the allegation, and about the alleged victim, see paragraphs 114-122 in KCSIE 2025 Part two about information sharing.

Where the police are involved, wherever possible the Pre School should ask the police to obtain consent from the individuals involved to share their statements and evidence for use in the employer's disciplinary process. This should be done as their investigation proceeds and will enable the police to share relevant information without delaying the conclusion of their investigation or any court case.

Local authority children's social care should adopt a similar procedure when making enquiries to determine whether the child or children named in the allegation are in need of protection or services, so that any information obtained in the course of those enquiries which is relevant to a disciplinary case can be passed to the employer without delay.

The Pre School must make every effort to maintain confidentiality and guard against unwanted publicity while an allegation is being investigated or considered. The Education Act 2011 amended the Education Act 2002, to introduce reporting restrictions. These provisions made it an offence (except in the limited circumstance expressly permitted by the legislation), for any person to publish any material that may lead to the identification of a staff in the setting who has been accused by, or on behalf of, a child from the same setting (where that identification would identify the staff as the subject of the allegation).

The reporting restrictions apply until:

- the point that the accused person is charged with a relevant offence, or

The reporting restrictions are disapplied if the individual to whom the restrictions apply effectively waives their right to anonymity by going public themselves or by giving their written consent for another to do so or if a court lifts the reporting restrictions in response to a request to do so.

The legislation prevents the "publication" of material by any person that may lead to the identification of the teacher who is the subject of the allegation. "Publication" includes "any speech, writing, relevant programme or other communication in whatever form, which is addressed to the public at large or any section of the public." This means that a parent who, for example, published details of the allegation on a social networking site would be in breach of the reporting restrictions (if what was published could lead to the identification of staff by members of the public). In circumstances where the Pre School needs to make parents aware about an allegation, they should make parents and others aware that there are restrictions on publishing information.

In accordance with the [Authorised Professional Practice published by the College of Policing](#) in May 2017, the police will not normally provide any information to the press or media that might identify an individual who is under investigation, unless and until the person is charged with a criminal offence. In exceptional cases where the police wish to depart from that rule, for example an appeal to trace a suspect, they must apply to a magistrates' court to request that reporting restrictions be lifted.

The case manager should take advice from the LADO, the police and local authority children's social care to agree the following:

- who needs to know and exactly what information can be shared
- how to manage speculation, leaks and gossip
- what, if any, information can be reasonably given to the wider community to reduce speculation and
- how to manage press interest if, and when, it should arise.

Allegation outcomes

The definitions that should be used when Pre School determine the outcome of an allegation are set out below:

- **Substantiated:** there is sufficient evidence to prove the allegation
- **Malicious:** there is sufficient evidence to disprove the allegation and there has been a deliberate act to deceive or cause harm to the person subject of the allegation
- **False:** there is sufficient evidence to disprove the allegation
- **Unsubstantiated:** there is insufficient evidence to either prove or disprove the allegation. The term, therefore, does not imply guilt or innocence, or
- **Unfounded:** to reflect cases where there is no evidence or proper basis which supports the allegation being made.

Ultimately the options open to the Pre School depend on the nature and circumstances of the allegations and the evidence and information available. This will range from taking no further action, to dismissal or a decision not to use the person's services in future.

Following a substantiated allegation

If the allegation is substantiated and:

- the person is dismissed; resigns, or otherwise ceases to provide his or her services, or
- the employer ceases to use the person's services.

In the case of a member of staff at any Pre School, the case manager must consider whether to refer the matter to the TRA to consider whether the individual should be prohibited from teaching

There is a legal requirement for employers to make a referral to the DBS where they consider an individual has engaged in conduct that harmed (or is likely to harm) a child; or if a person otherwise poses a risk of harm to a child.

Following a criminal investigation or a prosecution

The police should inform the LADO and the employer immediately when:

- a criminal investigation and any subsequent trial are complete
- it is decided to close an investigation without charge, or
- it is decided not to continue to prosecute after the person has been charged.

In those circumstances, during the joint assessment meeting the LADO should discuss with the case manager whether any further action, including disciplinary action, is appropriate and, if so, how to proceed. The information provided by the police and/or local authority children's social care should also inform that decision. The options will depend on the circumstances of the case and the

consideration should take into account the result of the police investigation or the trial, as well as the different standard of proof required in disciplinary and criminal proceedings.

Unsubstantiated, unfounded, false or malicious allegations

If an allegation is determined to be unsubstantiated, unfounded, false or malicious, the LADO and the case manager should consider whether the child and/or the person who has made the allegation is in need of help or may have been abused by someone else and this was a cry for help. In such circumstances, a referral to local authority children's social care may be appropriate.

If an allegation is shown to be deliberately invented or malicious, the Pre School, should consider whether any disciplinary action is appropriate against the individual who made it as per their own behaviour policy.

Returning to work

Where it is decided on the conclusion of a case that a person who has been suspended can return to work, the case manager should consider how best to facilitate that. Guidance and advice are usually provided by LADO. Most people will benefit from some help and support to return to work after a stressful experience. Depending on the individual's circumstances, a phased return and/or the provision of a mentor to provide assistance and support in the short term may be appropriate. The case manager should also consider how the person's contact with the child or children who made the allegation can best be managed if they are still attending the Pre School.

Managing the situation and exit arrangements

Resignations and 'settlement agreements'

"Settlement agreements" (sometimes referred to as compromise agreements), by which a person agrees to resign if the employer agrees not to pursue disciplinary action and both parties agree a form of words to be used in any future reference, should not be used, where there are allegations that indicate the person is a risk or poses a risk of harm to children or deemed not suitable to work with children. Such an agreement will not prevent a thorough police and/or Pre School investigation where that is appropriate.

The Pre School should not cease their investigations if the person leaves, resigns or ceases to provide their services. It is important that every effort is made to reach a conclusion in all cases of allegations with a bearing on the safety or welfare of children, including any in which the person concerned refuses to cooperate.

Wherever possible, the accused should be given full opportunity to answer the allegation and make representations about it. The process of recording the allegation and any supporting evidence and reaching a judgement about whether it can be substantiated or otherwise on the basis of all the information available, should continue even if the accused does not cooperate. It may be difficult to reach a conclusion in those circumstances, and it may not be possible to apply any disciplinary sanctions if a person's period of notice expires before the process is complete, but it is important to reach and record an outcome wherever possible. The person concerned should be notified of the conclusion of the allegations and sanctions that might be posed.

Other than where allegations are false, malicious, unsubstantiated, or unfounded, the outcome should be made clear when providing references to prospective employers. This is particularly important where the person moves into another position involving working with children.

It is not appropriate to reach a settlement/compromise agreement if the person subject to the allegation resigns or their services cease to be used. However, in limited circumstances the Pre School

sometimes use settlement agreements to end the employment relationship on agreed terms, but not where there is an allegation that the individual poses a risk to children.

Where a settlement/compromise agreement is used, the Pre School should not let it prevent the employer from:

- fulfilling their legal duty to refer cases to the DBS where the referral criteria are met. Non-compliance of this duty is a criminal offence, or
- providing a reference to potential employers when requested, or
- considering whether to make a referral to the TRA where the criteria are met.

Record keeping

Details of allegations following an investigation that are found to have been malicious or false should be removed from personnel records unless the individual gives their consent for retention of the information. However, for all other allegations, i.e. substantiated, unfounded and unsubstantiated it is important that the following information is kept on the file of the person accused:

- a clear and comprehensive summary of the allegation
- details of how the allegation was followed up and resolved
- a note of any action taken, decisions reached and the outcome i.e. substantiated, unfounded or unsubstantiated
- a copy provided to the person concerned, where agreed by local authority children's social care or the police, and
- a declaration on whether the information will be referred to in any future reference.

The purpose of the record is to enable accurate information to be given in response to any future request for a reference. It will provide clarification in cases where future DBS checks reveal information from the police about an allegation that did not result in a criminal conviction and it will help to prevent unnecessary re- investigation if, as sometimes happens, an allegation re-surfaces after a period of time.

All other records should be retained at least until the accused has reached normal pension age or for a period of 10 years from the date of the allegation if that is longer.

The Information Commissioner has published guidance on employment records in its, The Information Commissioner Employment Practices Code which provides some practical advice on record retention.

References

Cases in which an allegation was found to be false, unfounded, unsubstantiated or malicious should not be included in employer references. Any repeated concerns or allegations which have all been found to be false, unfounded, unsubstantiated or malicious should also not be included in any reference. Substantiated safeguarding allegations that meet the harm threshold should be included in references, provided that the information is factual and does not include opinions.

Learning lessons

Throughout the process in handling allegations and at conclusion of a case in which an allegation is substantiated, the LADO should review the circumstances of the case with the case manager to determine whether there are any improvements to be made to the Pre School procedures to help prevent similar events in the future. This should include issues arising from any decision to suspend the member of staff, the duration of the suspension and whether or not suspension was justified.

Lessons should also be learnt from the use of suspension when the individual is subsequently reinstated. The LADO and case manager should consider how future investigations of a similar nature could be carried out without suspending the individual.

For all other cases, where the allegation concluded to be either, unfounded, false, malicious or unsubstantiated the case manager (and if they have been involved the LADO) should consider the facts and determine whether any lessons can be learned and if improvements can be made.

Non recent allegations

Where an adult makes an allegation to a Pre School that they were abused as a child, the individual should be advised to report the allegation to the police. Non recent allegations made by a child, should be reported to the LADO in line with the local authority's procedures for dealing with non-recent allegations. The LADO will coordinate with local authority children social care and the police. Abuse can be reported no matter how long ago it happened.

Concerns or allegations that do not meet the harm threshold

Proprietors should have policies and processes to deal with **any** concerns or allegations which **do not** meet the harm threshold, referred to in this guidance as 'low-level' concerns. It is important that Pre Schools have appropriate policies and processes in place to manage and record any such concerns and take appropriate action to safeguard children.

Low-level concerns

As part of their whole Pre School approach to safeguarding, Pre Schools should ensure that they promote an open a transparent culture in which all concerns about all adults working in or on behalf of the Pre School (including supply staff, volunteers and contractors) are dealt with promptly and appropriately.

Creating a culture in which all concerns about adults are shared responsibly and with the right person, recorded and dealt with appropriately, is critical. If implemented correctly, this should:

- enable Pre School to identify inappropriate, problematic or concerning behaviour early
- minimise the risk of abuse, and
- ensure that adults working in or on behalf of the Pre School are clear about professional boundaries and act within these boundaries, and in accordance with the ethos and values of the institution.

What is a low-level concern?

The term 'low-level' concern does not mean that it is insignificant. A low-level concern is any concern – no matter how small, and even if no more than causing a sense of unease or a 'nagging doubt' - that an adult working in or on behalf of the Pre School may have acted in a way that:

- is inconsistent with the staff code of conduct, including inappropriate conduct outside of work, and
- does not meet the harm threshold or is otherwise not serious enough to consider a referral to the LADO.

Examples of such behaviour could include, but are not limited to:

- being over friendly with children
- having favourites

- taking photographs of children on their mobile phone, contrary to school policy
- engaging with a child on a one-to-one basis in a secluded area or behind a closed door, or
- humiliating children.

Such behaviour can exist on a wide spectrum, from the inadvertent or thoughtless, or behaviour that may look to be inappropriate, but might not be in specific circumstances, through to that which is ultimately intended to enable abuse.

Low-level concerns may arise in several ways and from a number of sources. For example: suspicion; complaint; or disclosure made by a child, parent or other adult within or outside of the organisation; or as a result of vetting checks undertaken.

It is crucial that all low-level concerns are shared responsibly with the right person and recorded and dealt with appropriately. Ensuring they are dealt with effectively should also protect those working in or on behalf of Pre School from becoming the subject of potential false low-level concerns or misunderstandings.

Staff code of conduct and safeguarding policies

As good practice proprietors should set out their low-level concerns policy within their staff code of conduct. They should make it clear what a low-level concern is and the importance of sharing low-level concerns, and an explanation of what the purpose of the policy is – i.e to create and embed a culture of openness, trust and transparency in which the Pre Schools values and expected behaviour set out in the staff code of conduct are lived, monitored and reinforced constantly by all staff.

As set out in Part two of KCISE 2024, the proprietor should ensure their staff code of conduct, behaviour policies and safeguarding policies and procedures are implemented effectively and ensure that appropriate action is taken in a timely manner to safeguard children and facilitate a whole setting approach to dealing with any concerns.

Pre School can achieve the purpose of their low-level concerns policy by:

- ensuring their staff are clear about what appropriate behaviour is, and are confident in distinguishing expected and appropriate behaviour from inappropriate, problematic or concerning behaviour, in themselves and others
- empowering staff to share any low-level safeguarding concerns (see below)
- addressing unprofessional behaviour and supporting the individual to correct it at an early stage
- handling and responding to such concerns sensitively and proportionately when they are raised, and
- helping identify any weakness in the school or colleges safeguarding system.

Sharing low-level concerns

The Pre School should ensure that their low-level concerns policy contains a procedure for sharing confidentially such concerns which is clear, easy to understand and implement. Whether all low-level concerns are shared initially with the DSL (or a nominated person), or with the manager is a matter for the Pre School to decide. If the former, then the DSL should inform the manager of all the low-level concerns and in a timely fashion according to the nature of each particular low-level concern. The manager should be the ultimate decision maker in respect of all low-level concerns, although it is recognised that depending on the nature of some low-level concerns and/or the role of the DSL in some Pre School, the manager may wish to consult with the DSL and take a more collaborative decision making approach.

Low-level concerns which are shared about supply staff and contractors should be notified to their employers, so that any potential patterns of inappropriate behaviour can be identified.

If the Pre School is in any doubt as to whether the information which has been shared about a member of staff as a low-level concern in fact meets the harm threshold, they should consult with their LADO.

The Pre School should ensure they create an environment where staff are encouraged and feel confident to self-refer, where, for example, they have found themselves in a situation which could be misinterpreted, might appear compromising to others, and/or on reflection they believe they have behaved in such a way that they consider falls below the expected professional standards.

Recording low-level concerns.

All low-level concerns should be recorded in writing. The record should include details of the concern, the context in which the concern arose, and action taken. The name of the individual sharing their concerns should also be noted, if the individual wishes to remain anonymous then that should be respected as far as reasonably possible.

The Pre School can decide where these records are kept, but they must be kept confidential, held securely and comply with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR).

Records should be reviewed so that potential patterns of inappropriate, problematic or concerning behaviour can be identified. Where a pattern of such behaviour is identified, the Pre School should decide on a course of action, either through its disciplinary procedures or where a pattern of behaviour moves from a low-level concern to meeting the harm threshold, in which case it should be referred to the LADO. Consideration should also be given to whether there are wider cultural issues within the Pre School that enabled the behaviour to occur and where appropriate policies could be revised, or extra training delivered to minimise the risk of it happening again.

It is for the Pre School to decide how long they retain such information, but it is recommended that it is retained at least until the individual leaves their employment, as set out in KCSIE.

References

The Pre School should only provide substantiated safeguarding concerns/allegations (including a group of low-level concerns about the same individual) that meet the harm threshold in references. Low-level concerns should not be included in references unless they relate to issues which would normally be included in a reference, for example, misconduct or poor performance. It follows that a low-level concern which relates exclusively to safeguarding (and not to misconduct or poor performance) should not be referred to in a reference.

Responding to low-level concerns

The Pre School low-level concerns should set out the procedure for responding to reports of low-level concerns. If the concern has been raised via a third party, the manager (or a nominated deputy) should collect as much evidence as possible by speaking:

- directly to the person who raised the concern, unless it has been raised anonymously, and
- to the individual involved and any witnesses.

The information collected will help them to categorise the type of behaviour and determine what further action may need to be taken. This information needs to be recorded in writing along with the rationale for their decisions and action taken.

A good low-level concerns policy will simply be a reflection and extension of the Pre School wider staff behaviour policy/code of conduct.

More detailed guidance and case studies on low-level concerns can be found in: Developing and implementing a low-level concerns policy: a guide for organisations which work with children (farrer.co.uk).

Child-on-child sexual violence and sexual harassment

This part is about how the Pre school **should respond to all signs, reports and concerns** of child-on-child sexual violence and sexual harassment, including those that have happened outside of the premises, and/or online (what to look out for and indicators of abuse are set out in this guidance). As set out in this guidance, all staff working with children are advised to maintain an attitude of **'it could happen here'**, and this is especially important when considering child-on-child abuse.

What the Pre School should be aware of

Sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur between two or more children of any age and sex, from as early Pre School, primary through to secondary stage and into college. It can occur also through a group of children sexually assaulting or sexually harassing a single child or group of children. Sexual violence and sexual harassment exist on a continuum and may overlap; they can occur online and face-to-face (both physically and verbally) and are never acceptable. The Pre school should be aware of the importance of:

- making clear that there is a **zero-tolerance** approach to sexual violence and sexual harassment, that it is never acceptable, and it will not be tolerated. It should **never** be passed off as "banter", "just having a laugh", "a part of growing up" or "boys being boys". Failure to do so can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviour, an unsafe environment and in worst case scenarios a culture that normalises abuse, leading to children accepting it as normal and not coming forward to report it
- recognising, acknowledging, and understanding the scale of harassment and abuse and that even if there are no reports it does not mean it is not happening, it may be the case that it is just not being reported
- challenging physical behaviour (potentially criminal in nature) such as grabbing bottoms, breasts and genitalia, pulling down trousers, flicking bras and lifting up skirts. Dismissing or tolerating such behaviours risks normalising them

Children who are victims of sexual violence and sexual harassment wherever it happens, may find the experience stressful and distressing. This will, in all likelihood, adversely affect their educational attainment and will be exacerbated if the alleged perpetrator(s) attends the same setting.

Whilst any report of sexual violence or sexual harassment should be taken seriously, staff should be aware it is more likely girls will be the victims of sexual violence and sexual harassment and more likely it will be perpetrated by boys. Children with disabilities are also three times more likely to be abused than their peers

Ultimately, it is essential that all victims are reassured that they are being taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe.

Sexual violence

It is important that the setting is aware of sexual violence and the fact children can, and sometimes do, abuse other children in this way and that it **can happen both inside and outside of premises**. When referring to sexual violence in this advice, we do so in the context of child-on-child sexual violence. When referring to sexual violence we are referring to sexual offences under the Sexual Offences Act 2003 as described below:

Rape: A person (A) commits an offence of rape if: he intentionally penetrates the vagina, anus or mouth of another person (B) with his penis, B does not consent to the penetration and A does not reasonably believe that B consents.

Assault by Penetration: A person (A) commits an offence if: s/he intentionally penetrates the vagina or anus of another person (B) with a part of her/his body or anything else, the penetration is sexual, B does not consent to the penetration and A does not reasonably believe that B consents.

Sexual Assault: A person (A) commits an offence of sexual assault if: s/he intentionally touches another person (B), the touching is sexual, B does not consent to the touching and A does not reasonably believe that B consents. (NOTE - be aware that sexual assault covers a very wide range of behaviour so a single act of kissing someone without consent or touching someone's bottom/breasts/genitalia without consent, can still constitute sexual assault).

Causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent: A person (A) commits an offence if: s/he intentionally causes another person (B) to engage in an activity, the activity is sexual, B does not consent to engaging in the activity, and A does not reasonably believe that B consents. (NOTE – this could include forcing someone to strip, touch themselves sexually, or to engage in sexual activity with a third party).

What is consent? Consent is about having the freedom and capacity to choose. Consent to sexual activity may be given to one sort of sexual activity but not another, e.g. to vaginal but not anal sex or penetration with conditions, such as wearing a condom. Consent can be withdrawn at any time during sexual activity and each time activity occurs. Someone consents to vaginal, anal or oral penetration only if s/he agrees by choice to that penetration and has the freedom and capacity to make that choice.

- a child under the age of 13 can never consent to any sexual activity
- the age of consent is 16
- sexual intercourse without consent is rape

Further information about consent can be found here: [Rape Crisis England & Wales - Sexual consent](#)

Sexual harassment

When referring to sexual harassment we mean 'unwanted conduct of a sexual nature' that can occur online and offline and both inside and outside of setting. When we reference sexual harassment, we do so in the context of child-on-child sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is likely to: violate a child's dignity, and/or make them feel intimidated, degraded or humiliated and/or create a hostile, offensive or sexualised environment.

Whilst not intended to be an exhaustive list, sexual harassment can include:

- sexual comments, such as: telling sexual stories, making lewd comments, making sexual remarks about clothes and appearance and calling someone sexualised names
- sexual "jokes" or taunting

- physical behaviour, such as: deliberately brushing against someone, interfering with someone's clothes. This should be considered when any of this crosses a line into sexual violence – it is important to talk to and consider the experience of the victim displaying pictures, photos or drawings of a sexual nature
- upskirting (this is a criminal offence), and
- online sexual harassment. This may be standalone, or part of a wider pattern of sexual harassment and/or sexual violence. It may include:

-consensual and non-consensual sharing of nude and semi-nude images and/or videos. Taking and sharing nude photographs of those aged under 18 is a criminal offence. [UKCIS Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people](#) provides detailed advice

-sharing of unwanted explicit content

-sexualised online bullying

-unwanted sexual comments and messages, including, on social media

-sexual exploitation; coercion and threats, and

-coercing others into sharing images of themselves or performing acts they're not comfortable with online

It is important that when considering sexual harassment in broad terms. Sexual harassment (as set out above) creates a culture that, if not challenged, can normalise inappropriate behaviours and provide an environment that may lead to sexual violence.

Harmful sexual behaviour

Children's sexual behaviour exists on a wide continuum, ranging from normal and developmentally expected to inappropriate, problematic, abusive and violent. Problematic, abusive and violent sexual behaviour is developmentally inappropriate and may cause developmental damage. A useful umbrella term is illegal and abusive.

"harmful sexual behaviour" (HSB). The term has been widely adopted in child protection and is used in this advice. **HSB can occur online and/or face-to-face and can also occur simultaneously between the two.** HSB should be considered in a child protection context.

When considering HSB, both ages and the stages of development of the children are critical factors. Sexual behaviour between children can be considered harmful if one of the children is much older, particularly if there is more than two years' difference or if one of the children is pre-pubescent and the other is not. However, a younger child can abuse an older child, particularly if they have power over them, for example, if the older child is disabled or smaller in stature. Confidential specialist support and advice on HSB is available from the specialist sexual violence sector and sources are listed in Annex B of KCSIE 2025.

It is effective safeguarding practice for the designated safeguarding lead (and their deputies) to have a good understanding of HSB. This could form part of their safeguarding training. This will aid in planning preventative education, implementing preventative measures, drafting and implementing an effective child protection policy and incorporating the approach to sexual violence and sexual harassment into the whole setting approach to safeguarding.

HSB can, in some cases, progress on a continuum. Addressing inappropriate behaviour can be an important intervention that helps prevent problematic, abusive and/or violent behaviour in the future. Children displaying HSB have often experienced their own abuse and trauma. It is important that they are offered appropriate support.

Preventing abuse

Effective safeguarding practice is demonstrated when the setting is clear, in advance, about what local processes are in place and what support can be accessed when sexual violence or sexual harassment has occurred. It is important to prepare for this in advance and review this information on a regular basis to ensure it is up to date. As such:

- if required, the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) should discuss the local response to sexual violence and sexual harassment with police and local authority children's social care colleagues in order to prepare/review the settings policies and responses, and
- the designated safeguarding lead (and their deputies) should be confident as to what local specialist support is available to support all children involved (including victims and alleged perpetrators) in sexual violence and sexual harassment and be confident as to how to access this support when required. Further information on specialist support and interventions can be found in Annex B of KCSIE 2025 in the additional advice and support section under "sexual violence and sexual harassment".

Responding to reports of sexual violence and sexual harassment

It is clear that systems should be 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. Reports of sexual violence and sexual harassment are likely to be complex and require difficult professional decisions to be made, often quickly and under pressure. Pre-planning, effective training and effective policies will provide the setting with the foundation for a calm, considered and appropriate response to any reports. Proprietors should ensure that the setting contributes to multi-agency working in line with statutory guidance [Working Together to Safeguard Children](#).

This part does not attempt to provide (nor would it be possible to provide) detailed guidance on what to do in any or every case. Effective safeguarding practice and principles for the setting to consider in their decision-making process. Ultimately, any decisions are for the setting to make on a case-by-case basis, with the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) taking a leading role and using their professional judgement, supported by other agencies, such as local authority children's social care and the police as required. KCSIE 2025 guidance provides case studies. These are not intended to offer a step-by-step guide, but to provide an indication of some of the various options that are available to respond to reports of sexual violence and sexual harassment.

Support for the Pre School

The Pre School should not feel that they are alone in dealing with sexual violence and sexual harassment. Local authority children's social care and the police will be important partners where a crime might have been committed. Referrals to the police will often be a natural progression of making a referral to local authority children's social care. The designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) should lead the settings response and should be aware of the local process for referrals to children's social care and making referrals to the police. The following resources helpful:

- **National Crime Agency's CEOP Safety Centre** aims to keep children and young people safe from online sexual abuse. Online sexual abuse can be reported on their website and a report made to one of its Child Protection Advisors.

- **The NSPCC** provides a helpline for professionals at 0808 800 5000 and help@nspcc.org.uk. The helpline provides expert advice and support for school and college staff and will be especially useful for the designated safeguarding lead (and their deputies)
- Support from **specialist sexual violence sector organisations** such as [Rape Crisis](#) or [The Survivors Trust](#)
- **The Anti-Bullying Alliance** has developed guidance for schools about [Sexual and sexist bullying](#).

Online: The setting should recognise that sexual violence and sexual harassment occurring online (either in isolation or in connection with face-to-face incidents) can introduce a number of complex factors. Amongst other things, this can include widespread abuse or harm across a number of social media platforms that leads to repeat victimisation. Online concerns can be especially complicated and support is available from:

- **The UK Safer Internet Centre** provides an online safety helpline for professionals at 0344 381 4772 and helpline@saferinternet.org.uk. The helpline provides expert advice and support for school and college staff with regard to online safety issues
 - **Internet Watch Foundation:** If the incident/report involves sexual images or videos that have been made and circulated online, the victim can be supported to get the images removed by the [Internet Watch Foundation \(IWF\)](#)
 - **Childline/IWF: Report Remove** is a free tool that allows children to report nude or sexual images and/or videos of themselves that they think might have been shared online
 - **UKCIS Sharing nudes and semi-nudes advice:** [Advice for education settings working with children and young people](#) on responding to reports of children sharing non-consensual nude and semi-nude images and/or videos (also known as sexting and youth produced sexual imagery).
- National Crime Agency's [CEOP Education Programme](#) provides information for the children's workforce and parents and carers on protecting children and young people from online child sexual abuse.
 - LGFL '[Undressed](#)' provided schools advice about how to teach young children about being tricked into getting undressed online in a fun way without scaring them or explaining the motives of sex offenders.

Additional sources of support are listed further in the policy.

The immediate response to a report - Responding to the report

It is important to understand that children may not find it easy to tell staff about their abuse verbally. Children can show signs or act in ways that they hope adults will notice and react to. In some cases, the victim may not make a direct report. For example, a friend may make a report, or a member of staff may overhear a conversation that suggests a child has been harmed or a child's own behaviour might indicate that something is wrong. If staff have any concerns about a child's welfare, they should act on them immediately rather than wait to be told.

The initial response by the setting to a report from a child is incredibly important. How the staff responds to a report can encourage or undermine the confidence of future victims of sexual violence and sexual harassment to report or come forward.

It is essential that all victims are reassured that they are being taken seriously, regardless of how long it has taken them to come forward, and that they will be supported and kept safe. Abuse that occurs online or outside of the setting should not be downplayed and should be treated equally seriously. A victim should never be given the impression that they are creating a problem by reporting sexual

violence or sexual harassment. Nor should a victim ever be made to feel ashamed for making a report. It is important to explain that the law is in place to protect children and young people rather than criminalise them, and this should be explained in such a way that avoids alarming or distressing them.

All staff should be trained to manage a report. Local policies (and training) will dictate exactly how reports should be managed. However, effective safeguarding practice includes:

- if possible, managing reports with two members of staff present, (preferably one of them being the designated safeguarding lead or a deputy)
- careful management and handling of reports that include an online element. Including being aware of [searching screening and confiscation advice](#) (for schools) and [UKCIS Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people](#). **The key consideration is for staff not to view or forward illegal images of a child.** The highlighted advice provides more details on what to do when viewing an image is unavoidable. In some cases, it may be more appropriate to confiscate any devices to preserve any evidence and hand them to the police for inspection
- not promising confidentiality at this initial stage as it is very likely a concern will have to be shared further (for example, with the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) or local authority children's social care) to discuss next steps. Staff should only share the report with those people who are necessary in order to progress it. It is important that the victim understands what the next steps will be and who the report will be passed to
- recognising that a child is likely to disclose to someone they trust: this could be **anyone** on the staffing team. It is important that the person to whom the child discloses recognises that the child has placed them in a position of trust. They should be supportive and respectful of the child
- recognising that an initial disclosure to a trusted adult may only be the first incident reported, rather than representative of a singular incident and that trauma can impact memory and so children may not be able to recall all details or timeline of abuse
- keeping in mind that certain children may face additional barriers to telling someone because of their vulnerability, disability, sex, ethnicity, and/or sexual orientation
- listening carefully to the child, reflecting back, using the child's language, being non-judgemental, being clear about boundaries and how the report will be progressed, not asking leading questions and only prompting the child where necessary with open questions – where, when, what, etc. It is important to note that whilst leading questions should be avoided, staff can ask children if they have been harmed and what the nature of that harm was
- considering the best way to make a record of the report. Best practice is to wait until the end of the report and immediately write up a thorough summary. This allows the staff member to devote their full attention to the child and to listen to what they are saying. It may be appropriate to make notes during the report (especially if a second member of staff is present). However, if making notes, staff should be conscious of the need to remain engaged with the child and not appear distracted by the note taking. Either way, **it is essential a written record is made**
- only recording the facts as the child presents them. The notes should not reflect the personal opinion of the note taker. Staff should be aware that notes of such reports could become part of a statutory assessment by local authority children's social care and/or part of a criminal investigation, and
- informing the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy), as soon as practically possible, if the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) is not involved in the initial report.

Confidentiality

Staff taking a report should never promise confidentiality as it is very likely that it will be in the best interests of the victim to seek advice and guidance from others in order to provide support and engage appropriate agencies.

The setting should only engage staff and agencies who are required to support the children involved and/or be involved in any investigation.

The victim may ask the setting not to tell anyone about the sexual violence or sexual harassment. There are no easy or definitive answers when a victim makes this request. If the victim does not give consent to share information, staff may still lawfully share it, if there is another legal basis under the UK GDPR that applies. For example, the public task basis may apply, where the overall purpose is to perform a public interest task or exercise official authority, and the task or authority has a clear basis in law. Information should be shared with the School if their child discloses information during afterschool Club. Advice should be sought from the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy), who should consider the following:

- parents or carers should normally be informed (unless this would put the victim at greater risk)
- the basic safeguarding principle is: if a child is at risk of harm, is in immediate danger, or has been harmed, a referral should be made to local authority children's social care, and
- rape, assault by penetration and sexual assaults are crimes. Where a report of rape, assault by penetration or sexual assault is made, this should be referred to the police. Whilst the age of criminal responsibility is ten, if the alleged perpetrator is under ten, the starting principle of referring to the police remains. The police will take a welfare, rather than a criminal justice approach, in these cases.

Ultimately, the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) will have to balance the victim's wishes against their duty to protect the victim and other children. If the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) decide to go ahead and make a referral to local authority children's social care and/or a report to the police against the victim's wishes, this should be handled extremely carefully, the reasons should be explained to the victim and appropriate specialist support should be offered. Additional information on confidentiality and information sharing is available at [Safeguarding Practitioners Information Sharing Advice](#) and [NSPCC: Information sharing and confidentiality for practitioners](#).

Anonymity

Where an allegation of sexual violence or sexual harassment is progressing through the criminal justice system, the setting should be aware of anonymity, witness support, and the criminal process in general so they can offer support and act appropriately. Relevant information can be found in: [CPS: Safeguarding Children as Victims and Witnesses](#). As a matter of effective safeguarding practice, The Pre School should do all they reasonably can to protect the anonymity of any children involved in any report of sexual violence or sexual harassment. Amongst other things, this will mean carefully considering, based on the nature of the report, which staff should know about the report and any support that will be put in place for the children involved.

The Pre School should also consider the potential impact of social media in facilitating the spreading of rumours and exposing victims' identities. The unique challenges regarding social media are discussed at paragraph 472 of KCSIE 2025 along with potential support. In addition, the principles described in [Childnet's cyberbullying guidance](#) could be helpful.

Risk assessment

When there has been a report of sexual violence, the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) should make an immediate risk and needs assessment. Where there has been a report of sexual harassment, the need for a risk assessment should be considered on a case-by-case basis. The risk and needs assessment for a report of sexual violence should consider:

It is not the role of the setting to provide legal advice or support to victims, alleged perpetrators or parents in respect of a criminal justice process. Rather, the setting should be aware of their own position and responsibilities.

- the victim, especially their protection and support
- whether there may have been other victims
- the alleged perpetrator(s)
- all the other children, (and, if appropriate, adult students and staff) at the setting, especially any actions that are appropriate to protect them from the alleged perpetrator(s), or from future harms, and
- The time and location of the incident, and any action required to make the location safer.

Risk assessments should be recorded (paper or electronic) and should be kept under review. At all times, the Pre School should be actively considering the risks posed to all their children and put adequate measures in place to protect them and keep them safe.

The designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) should ensure they are engaging with local authority children's social care and specialist services as required. Where there has been a report of sexual violence, it is likely that professional risk assessments by social workers and or sexual violence specialists will be required. The above risk assessment is not intended to replace the detailed assessments of expert professionals. Any such professional assessments should be used to inform the Pre School approach to supporting and protecting their pupils and students and updating their own risk assessment.

Action following a report of sexual violence and/or sexual harassment

What to consider

Sexual violence and sexual harassment can happen anywhere, and all staff working with The Pre School should be aware of and respond appropriately to **all** reports and concerns about sexual violence and/or sexual harassment both setting. The designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) is likely to have a complete safeguarding picture and be the most appropriate person to advise on the initial response by the setting. Important considerations will include:

- the wishes of the victim in terms of how they want to proceed. This is especially important in the context of sexual violence and sexual harassment. Victims should be given as much control as is reasonably possible over decisions regarding how any investigation will be progressed and any support that they will be offered. This will however need to be balanced with the schools or college's duty and responsibilities to protect other children
- the nature of the alleged incident(s), including whether a crime may have been committed and/or whether HSB has been displayed
- the ages of the children involved
- the developmental stages of the children involved
- any power imbalance between the children. For example, is/are the alleged perpetrator(s) significantly older, more mature, confident and well known social standing? Does the victim have a disability or learning difficulty?

- if the alleged incident is a one-off or a sustained pattern of abuse (sexual abuse can be accompanied by other forms of abuse and a sustained pattern may not just be of a sexual nature)
- that sexual violence and sexual harassment can take place within intimate personal relationships between children
- importance of understanding intra familial harms and any necessary support for siblings following incidents
- are there ongoing risks to the victim, other children, adult students or school or college or Pre School staff, and
- other related issues and wider context, including any links to child sexual exploitation and child criminal exploitation.

As always when concerned about the welfare of the setting should follow general safeguarding principles as set out throughout this guidance. **Immediate** consideration should be given as to how best to support and protect the victim and the alleged perpetrator(s) (and any other children involved/impacted).

Options to manage the report

It is important to consider every report on a case-by- case basis as per paragraph 489 of KCSIE 2025. When to inform the alleged perpetrator(s) will be a decision that should be carefully considered. Where a report is going to be made to local authority children's social care and/or the police, then, as a general rule, the designated safeguarding lead should speak to the local authority children's social care and the police and discuss next steps and how the alleged perpetrator(s) will be informed of the allegations. However, as per general safeguarding principles, this does not and should not stop the setting taking immediate action to safeguard its children, where required.

There are four likely scenarios for the Pre School to consider when managing any reports of sexual violence and/or sexual harassment. The four scenarios are:

1. Manage internally

In some cases of sexual harassment, for example, one-off incidents, the Pre School may take the view that the children concerned are not in need of early help or that referrals to statutory services are not required, and that it would be appropriate to handle the incident internally, perhaps through utilising their behaviour policy and by providing pastoral support. Whatever the response, it should be underpinned by the principle that there is a zero-tolerance approach to sexual violence and sexual harassment, and it is never acceptable and will not be tolerated.

All concerns, discussions, decisions and reasons for decisions should be recorded (written or electronic).

2. Early help

In line with managing internally, the Pre School may decide that the children involved do not require referral to statutory services but may benefit from early help. Early help is support for children of all ages that improves a family's resilience and outcomes or reduces the chance of a problem getting worse. Providing early help is more effective in promoting the welfare of children than reacting later. Early help can be particularly useful to address non-violent HSB and may prevent escalation of sexual violence. It is particularly important that the designated safeguarding lead (and their deputies) know what the local early help process is and how and where to access support.

Multi-agency early help will work best when placed alongside strong the settings policies, preventative education and engagement with parents and carers.

Pre Schools, as relevant agencies, should be part of discussions with statutory safeguarding partners to agree the levels for the different types of assessment and services to be commissioned and delivered, as part of the local arrangements. Safeguarding partners should publish a local threshold document which includes the process for the local early help assessment and the type and level of early help services to be provided, and designated safeguarding leads (and their deputies) will need to familiarise themselves with this document.

Early help and the option to manage a report internally do not need to be mutually exclusive: a Pre School could manage internally and seek early help for both the victim and alleged perpetrator(s). Whatever the response, it should be under-pinned by the principle that there is zero-tolerance approach to sexual violence and sexual harassment and that both are never acceptable and will not be tolerated.

All concerns, discussions, decisions and reasons for decisions should be recorded (written or electronic).

3. Referrals to local authority children's social care

Where a child has been harmed, is at risk of harm, or is in immediate danger, Pre Schools should make a referral to local authority children's social care. At the point of referral to local authority children's social care, the Pre School will generally inform parents or carers, unless there are compelling reasons not to (if informing a parent or carer is going to put the child at additional risk). Any such decision should be made with the support of local authority children's social care.

If a referral is made, local authority children's social care will then make enquiries to determine whether any of the children involved are in need of protection or other services. Where statutory assessments are appropriate, the Pre School (especially the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) should be working alongside, and cooperating with, the relevant lead social worker. Collaborative working will help ensure the best possible package of coordinated support is implemented for the victim and, where appropriate, the alleged perpetrator(s) and any other children that require support.

The Pre School should not wait for the outcome (or even the start) of a local authority children's social care investigation before protecting the victim and other children in the setting. It will be important for the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) to work closely with local authority children's social care (and other agencies as required) to ensure any actions the school or college takes do not jeopardise a statutory investigation. The risk assessment will help inform any decision. Consideration of safeguarding the victim, alleged perpetrator(s), any other children directly involved in the safeguarding report.

In some cases, local authority children's social care will review the evidence and decide that a statutory intervention is not appropriate. The Pre School (generally led by the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) should be prepared to refer again if they believe the child remains in immediate danger or at risk of harm or if circumstances change. If a statutory assessment is not appropriate, the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) should consider other support mechanisms such as early help, specialist support and pastoral support. Whatever the response, it should be under-pinned by the principle that there is a zero- tolerance approach to sexual violence and sexual harassment and that both are never acceptable and will not be tolerated.

All concerns, discussions, decisions and reasons for decisions should be recorded (written or electronic).

4. Reporting to the Police

Any report to the police will generally be in parallel with a referral to local authority children's social care (as above). It is important that the designated safeguarding lead (and their deputies) are clear about the local process for referrals and follow that process.

Where a report of rape, assault by penetration or sexual assault is made, the starting point is that this should be passed on to the police. Whilst the age of criminal responsibility is ten, if the alleged perpetrator(s) is under ten, the starting principle of reporting to the police remains. The police will take a welfare, rather than a criminal justice, approach. The following advice may help schools and colleges decide when to engage the Police and what to expect of them when they do: [When to call the police](#).

Where a report has been made to the police, the Pre School should consult the police and agree what information can be disclosed to staff and others, in particular, the alleged perpetrator(s) and their parents or carers. They should also discuss the best way to protect the victim and their anonymity.

At this stage, the Pre School will generally inform parents or carers unless there are compelling reasons not to, for example, if informing a parent or carer is likely to put a child at additional risk. In circumstances where parents or carers have not been informed, it will be especially important that the school or college is supporting the child in any decision they take. This should be with the support of local authority children's social care and any appropriate specialist agencies.

All police forces in England have specialist units that investigate child abuse. The names and structures of these units are matters for local forces. It will be important that the designated safeguarding lead (and their deputies) are aware of their local arrangements.

In some cases, it may become clear very quickly that the police (for whatever reason) will not take further action. In such circumstances, it is important that the Pre School continues to engage with specialist support for the victim and alleged perpetrator(s) as required.

Whilst protecting children and/or taking any disciplinary measures against the alleged perpetrator(s), it will be important for the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) to work closely with the police (and other agencies as required), to ensure any actions the setting take do not jeopardise the police investigation. If a Pre School has questions about the investigation, they should ask the police. The police will help and support the setting as much as they can (within the constraints of any legal restrictions). Whatever the response, it should be underpinned by the principle that there is a zero-tolerance approach to sexual violence and sexual harassment and that both are never acceptable and will not be tolerated.

All concerns, discussions, decisions and reasons for decisions should be recorded (written or electronic).

Considering bail conditions

The police will consider what action to take to manage the assessed risk of harm. This could involve the use of police bail with conditions, prior to a suspect appearing in court, or court bail with or without conditions after the first appearance. Alternatively, the person suspected of an offence could be 'released under investigation' (RUI). People released under RUI will not necessarily have conditions attached to their release from custody and it is possible for a person on bail also to have no conditions. Whatever arrangements are in place, the Pre School will need to consider what additional measures may be necessary to manage any assessed risk of harm that may arise within their institution. Particular regard should be given to the additional stress and trauma that might be caused to a victim within the institution; the potential for the suspected person to intimidate the victim or a witness; the need to ensure that any risk management measures strike a balance between

management of risk and the rights of an un-convicted person (e.g. rights to privacy, family life, etc). Careful liaison with the police investigators should help to develop a balanced set of arrangements.

Managing any delays in the criminal process

There may be delays in any case that is being progressed through the criminal justice system. The Pre School should not wait for the outcome (or even the start) of a police investigation before protecting the victim, alleged perpetrator(s) and other children. The risk assessment as per paragraph 487-489 KCSIE 2025 will help inform any decision.

Considering any disciplinary action against the alleged perpetrator(s) whilst an investigation is ongoing is discussed below in the alleged perpetrator(s) section. Whilst protecting children and/or taking any disciplinary measures against the alleged perpetrator(s), it will be important for the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) to work closely with the police (and other agencies as required), to ensure any actions the setting take do not jeopardise the police investigation.

If the setting have questions about the investigation, they should ask the police. The police will help and support the setting as much as they can (within the constraints of any legal restrictions).

The end of the criminal process

If a child is convicted or receives a caution for a sexual offence, the Pre School should update its risk assessment, ensure relevant protections are in place for all the children at the Pre School and, if it has not already, consider any suitable action in line with their behaviour policy. This process should include a review of the necessary actions to keep all parties safe and meet their needs. If the perpetrator(s) remains in the same setting as the victim, the Pre School should be very clear as to their expectations regarding the perpetrator(s) now they have been convicted or cautioned. This could include expectations regarding their behaviour and any restrictions the setting thinks are reasonable and proportionate with regard to the lesson timetable of the perpetrator(s).

Any conviction (even with legal anonymity reporting restrictions) is potentially going to generate interest among other children in the setting. It will be important that the Pre School ensures both the victim and perpetrator(s) remain protected, especially from any bullying or harassment (including online).

Where cases are classified as “no further action” by the police or Crown Prosecution Service, or where there is a not guilty verdict, the Pre School should continue to offer support to the victim and the alleged perpetrator(s) for as long as is necessary. A not guilty verdict or a decision not to progress with their case will likely be traumatic for the victim. The fact that an allegation cannot be substantiated or was withdrawn does not necessarily mean that it was unfounded. The Pre School should discuss any decisions with the victim in this light and continue to offer support. The alleged perpetrator(s) is/are also likely to require ongoing support for what will have likely been a difficult experience.

If a report is determined to be unsubstantiated, unfounded, false or malicious, the designated safeguarding lead should consider whether the child and/or the person who has made the allegation is in need of help or may have been abused by someone else and this was a cry for help. In such circumstances, a referral to local authority children’s social care may be appropriate.

If a report is shown to be deliberately invented or malicious, the Pre School, should consider whether any disciplinary action is appropriate against the individual who made it as per their own behaviour policy.

Ongoing response - Safeguarding and supporting the victim

The following principles are based on effective safeguarding practice and should help shape any decisions regarding safeguarding and supporting the victim.

- The needs and wishes of the victim should be paramount (along with protecting the child) in any response. It is important they feel in as much control of the process as is reasonably possible. Wherever possible, the victim, if they wish, should be able to continue in their normal routine. Overall, the priority should be to make the victim's daily experience as normal as possible, so that the environment is a safe space for them.
 - Consider the age and the developmental stage of the victim, the nature of the allegation(s) and the potential risk of further abuse. Staff should be aware that, by the very nature of sexual violence and sexual harassment, a power imbalance is likely to have been created between the victim and alleged perpetrator(s).
 - The victim should never be made to feel they are the problem for making a report or made to feel ashamed for making a report.
 - Consider the proportionality of the response. Support should be tailored on a case-by-case basis. The support required regarding a one-off incident of sexualised name-calling is likely to be vastly different from that for a report of rape.
 - Staff should be aware that sexual assault can result in a range of health needs, including physical, mental, and sexual health problems and unwanted pregnancy. Children and young people that have a health need arising from sexual assault or abuse can access specialist NHS support from a Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC). SARCs offer confidential and non-judgemental support to victims and survivors of sexual assault and abuse. They provide medical, practical, and emotional care and advice to all children and adults, regardless of when the incident occurred.
- It will be important in all scenarios that decisions and actions are regularly reviewed and that relevant policies are updated to reflect lessons learnt. It is particularly important to look out for potential patterns of concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour. Where a pattern is identified, the setting should decide on a course of action. Consideration should be given as to whether there are wider cultural issues within the school or college that enabled the inappropriate behaviour to occur and where appropriate extra teaching time and/or staff training could be delivered to minimise the risk of it happening again.

Support can include:

- Early help and local authority children's social care as set out in Part one of this guidance.
- Children and Young People's Independent Sexual Violence Advisors (ChISVAs) provide emotional and practical support for victims of sexual violence. They are based within the specialist sexual violence sector and will help the victim understand what their options are and how the criminal justice process works if they have reported or are considering reporting to the police. ChISVAs will work in partnership with schools and colleges to ensure the best possible outcomes for the victim.
- Police and social care agencies can signpost to ChISVA services (where available), or referrals can be made directly to the ChISVA service by the young person or school or college. Contact details for ChISVAs can be found at [Rape Crisis](#) and [The Survivors Trust](#).
- [Children and young people's mental health services \(CYPMHS\)](#) is used as a term for all services that work with children who have difficulties with their emotional or behavioural wellbeing. Services vary depending on local authority. Most CYPMHS have their own website, which will have information about access, referrals and contact numbers.
- The specialist sexual violence sector can provide therapeutic support for children who have experienced sexual violence. Contact [Rape Crisis](#) (England & Wales) or [The Survivors Trust](#) for details of local specialist organisations. The [Male Survivors Partnership](#) can provide details of services which specialise in supporting men and boys.

- The NHS – [Help after rape and sexual assault - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk) provides a range of advice, help and support including advice about the risk of pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections (STI), reporting to the police and forensics.
- Rape and sexual assault referral centres services can be found at: [Find a rape and sexual assault referral centre](#). Sexual assault referral centres (SARCs) offer medical, practical and emotional support. They have specially trained doctors, nurses and support workers. If children, young people, or their families are unsure which service to access, they should contact their GP or call the NHS on 111.
- [Childline](#) provides free and confidential advice for children and young people.
- [Internet Watch Foundation](#) works internationally to remove child sexual abuse online images and videos and offers a place for the public to report them anonymously.
- [Childline / IWF: Remove a nude image shared online](#) Report Remove is a free tool that allows children to report nude or sexual images and videos of themselves that they think might have been shared online, to see if they can be removed from the internet.

While Pre School should avoid any action that would have the effect of isolating the victim, in particular from supportive peer groups, there may be times when the victim finds it difficult to maintain a full-time timetable and may express a wish to withdraw from lessons and activities. This should be because the victim wants to, not because it makes it easier to manage the situation. If required, Pre School should provide a physical space for victims to withdraw to.

It may be necessary for the Pre School to maintain arrangements to protect and support the victim for a long time. Pre Schools should be prepared for this and should work with local authority children's social care and other agencies as required.

It is therefore important that the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) knows how, when, and where to seek support. It is important that the Pre School do everything they reasonably can to protect the victim from bullying and harassment as a result of any report they have made. Whilst they should be given all the necessary support to remain in their Pre School if the trauma results in the victim being unable to do this, alternative provision or a move to another Pre School should be considered to enable them to continue to receive suitable education. This should only be at the request of the victim (and following discussion with their parents or carers).

It is important that if the victim does move to another educational institution (for any reason), that the new educational institution is made aware of any ongoing support needs. The designated safeguarding lead should take responsibility to ensure this happens (and should discuss with the victim and, where appropriate their parents or carers as to the most suitable way of doing this) as well as transferring the child protection file. Information sharing advice referenced at paragraphs 114-122 from KCSIE 2025 will help support this process.

Sanctions and the alleged perpetrator(s) Schools

With regard to the alleged perpetrator(s), advice on [behaviour in schools](#) is clear that teachers can sanction pupils whose conduct falls below the standard which could be reasonably expected of them. Statutory guidance for maintained schools, academies and PRUs on exclusions can be found [here](#). Disciplinary action can be taken whilst other investigations by the police and/or local authority children's social care are ongoing. The fact that another body is investigating or has investigated an incident does not in itself prevent a school from coming to its own conclusion, on the balance of probabilities, about what happened, and imposing a penalty accordingly. This is a matter for the school and should be carefully considered on a case-by-case basis. The designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) should take a leading role. The school should consider if, by taking any action, it would prejudice an investigation and/or any subsequent prosecution. Careful liaison with the police and/or local authority children's social care should help the school make a determination. It will also be important to consider whether there are circumstances that make it

unreasonable or irrational for the school to reach its own view about what happened while an independent investigation is considering the same facts.

Colleges

Whilst colleges are not under the same legal obligations as schools with regard to behaviour, the principles set out in paragraph 550 in KCSIE 2025 will still be relevant and should be applied to their decision-making process.

Discipline and support

Taking disciplinary action and still providing appropriate support are not mutually exclusive actions. They can, and should, occur at the same time if necessary. The Pre School, school or college should be very clear as to what its approach is. On the one hand there is preventative or forward-looking action to safeguard the victim and/or the perpetrator(s), especially where there are concerns that a perpetrator themselves may have been a victim of abuse; and, on the other, there is disciplinary action to punish a perpetrator for their past conduct. The school or college should be very clear as to which category any action they are taking falls or whether it is really both and should ensure that the action complies with the law relating to each relevant category.

Working with parents and carers

The Pre School will, in most instances, engage with both the victim's and the parents or carers of the alleged perpetrator(s) when there has been a report of sexual violence (this might not be necessary or proportionate in the case of sexual harassment and should be considered on a case-by-case basis). The exception to this rule is if there is a reason to believe informing a parent or carer will put a child at additional risk. The Pre School should carefully consider what information they provide to the respective parents or carers about the other child involved and when they do so. In some cases, local authority children's social care and/or the police will have a very clear view and it will be important for the school or college to work with relevant agencies to ensure a consistent approach is taken to information sharing.

It is good practice for the Pre School to meet the victim's parents or carers with the victim present to discuss what arrangements are being put in place to safeguard the victim and understand their wishes in terms of support they may need and how the report will be progressed.

It is also good practice for the Pre School to meet the parents or carers of the alleged perpetrator(s) to discuss any arrangements that are being put into place that impact an alleged perpetrator(s), such as, for example, moving them out of classes with the victim and what this means for their education. The reason behind any decisions should be explained. Support for the alleged perpetrator(s) should be discussed.

The designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) would generally attend any such meetings. Consideration to the attendance of other agencies should be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Clear behaviour policies and child protection policies, especially policies that set out the principles of how reports of sexual violence will be managed and how victims and alleged perpetrators are likely to be supported, that parents and carers have access to, will, in some cases, help manage what are inevitably very difficult conversations.

Parents and carers may well struggle to cope with a report that their child has been the victim of a sexual assault or is alleged to have sexually assaulted another child. Details of organisations that support parents are provided in Annex B of KCSIE 2025. The Pre School should consider signposting parents and carers to this support.

Safeguarding other children

Consideration should be given to supporting children (and adult students) who have witnessed sexual violence, especially rape and assault by penetration. Witnessing such an event is likely to be traumatic and support may be required.

Following any report of sexual violence or sexual harassment, it is likely that some children will take “sides”. The setting should be doing all they can to ensure both the victim and alleged perpetrator(s), and any witnesses, are not being bullied or harassed.

Social media is very likely to play a central role in the fall out from any incident or alleged incident. There is the potential for contact between victim and alleged perpetrator(s) and a very high likelihood that friends from either side could harass the victim or alleged perpetrator(s) online and/or become victims of harassment themselves.

Public transport is a potentially vulnerable place for a victim or alleged perpetrator(s) following any incident or alleged incident. The Pre School, as part of its risk assessment, should consider any additional potential support needs to keep all of their children safe.

A whole Pre School approach to safeguarding, a culture that makes clear that there is a zero-tolerance approach to sexual violence and sexual harassment and that both are never acceptable, and it will not be tolerated, and a strong preventative education programme will help create an environment in which all children at the Pre School are supportive and respectful of their peers when reports of sexual violence or sexual harassment are made.

It is important that Pre School keep their policies, processes, and curriculum under constant review to protect all their children. Reports of sexual violence and sexual harassment (especially where there is evidence of patterns of behaviour) may point to environmental and or systemic problems that could and should be addressed by updating relevant policies, processes, or relevant parts of the curriculum. Alongside this, patterns identified in Pre Schools may also be reflective of the wider issues within a local area and it is good practice to share emerging trends with safeguarding partners.

Role of the designated safeguarding lead

Little Stars should ensure an appropriate **senior member** of staff, from the **leadership team**, is appointed to the role of designated safeguarding lead. The designated safeguarding lead should take **lead responsibility** for safeguarding and child protection, it is not appropriate the proprietor to be the designated safeguarding lead (including online safety and understanding filtering and monitoring systems and processes in place, this should be part of ongoing training). This should be explicit in the role holder's job description.

The designated safeguarding lead should have the appropriate status and authority within the setting to carry out the duties of the post. The role of the designated safeguarding lead carries a significant level of responsibility, and they should be given the additional time, funding, training, resources and support they need to carry out the role effectively. Their additional responsibilities include providing advice and support to other staff on child welfare, safeguarding and child protection matters, taking part in strategy discussions and inter-agency meetings, and/or supporting other staff to do so, and to contributing to the assessment of children. It is down to the setting to decide whether to have 1 or more designated safeguarding leads, all should be trained to the same standard as the designated safeguarding lead.

Deputy designated safeguarding leads

It is a matter for us a provision as to whether we choose to have one or more deputy/designated safeguarding leads. Any deputies should be trained to the same standard as the designated

safeguarding lead and the role should be explicit in their job description. Whilst the activities of the designated safeguarding lead can be delegated to appropriately trained deputies, the ultimate lead responsibility for child protection, as set out above, remains with the designated safeguarding lead, this lead responsibility should not be delegated.

Availability

During term time the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) should always be available (during setting hours) for staff to discuss any safeguarding concerns. Whilst generally speaking the designated safeguarding lead (or deputy) would be expected to be available in person, it is a matter for the provision, working with the designated safeguarding lead, to define what “available” means and whether in exceptional circumstances availability via phone and or Skype or other such media is acceptable. It is a matter for the setting to and designated safeguarding lead to arrange adequate and appropriate cover arrangements for any out of term activities.

Manage referrals

The designated safeguarding lead is expected to refer cases:

- of suspected abuse and neglect to the local authority children’s social care as required and support staff who make referrals to local authority children’s social care
- to the Channel programme where there is a radicalisation concern as required and support staff who make referrals to the Channel programme
- where a person is dismissed or left due to risk/harm to a child to the Disclosure and Barring Service as required, and
- where a crime may have been committed to the Police as required. [NPCC - When to call the police](#) should help understand when to consider calling the police and what to expect when working with the police.

Working with others

The designated safeguarding lead is expected to:

- act as a source of support, advice and expertise for all staff
- act as a point of contact with the safeguarding partners
- liaise with other DSLs to inform them of issues- especially ongoing enquiries under section 47 of the Children Act 1989 and police investigations. This should include being aware of the requirement for children to have an Appropriate Adult. Further information can be found in the Statutory guidance - [PACE Code C 2019](#).
- as required, liaise with the “case manager” and the local authority designated officer(s) (LADO) for child protection concerns in cases which concern a staff member
- liaise with staff, especially special educational needs co- ordinators (SENCO’s), or the named person with oversight for SEND on matters of safety and safeguarding and welfare (including online and digital safety) and when deciding whether to make a referral by liaising with relevant agencies so that children’s needs are considered holistically
- liaise with the senior mental health lead and, where available, the mental health support team, where safeguarding concerns are linked to mental health in schools and colleagues
- promote supportive engagement with parents and/or carers in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, including where families may be facing challenging circumstances
- work with relevant leads, taking lead responsibility for promoting educational outcomes by knowing the welfare, safeguarding and child protection issues that children in need are experiencing, or have experienced, and identifying the impact that these issues might be having on children’s attendance, engagement and achievement. This includes:

-ensuring that the setting knows who its cohort of children who have or have had a social worker are, understanding their academic progress and attainment, and maintaining a culture of high aspirations for this cohort, and

-supporting staff to provide additional academic support or reasonable adjustments to help children who have or have had a social worker reach their potential, recognising that even when statutory social care intervention has ended, there is still a lasting impact on children's educational outcomes.

Information sharing and managing the child protection file

The designated safeguarding lead is responsible for ensuring that child protection files are kept up to date.

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
- a note of any action taken, decisions reached and the outcome.

They should ensure the file is only accessed by those who need to see it and where the file or content within it is shared, this happens in line with information sharing advice as set out in Part one and Part two of keeping children safe in education guidance.

Where children leave the setting (including in year transfers) the designated safeguarding lead should ensure their child protection file is transferred to the new setting 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. This should be transferred separately from the main child's file, ensuring secure transit, and confirmation of receipt should be obtained. Receiving settings should ensure key staff such as designated safeguarding leads and special educational needs co-ordinators (SENCO's) or the named person with oversight for SEND, are aware as required.

Lack of information about their circumstances can impact on the child's safety, welfare and educational outcomes. In addition to the child protection file, the designated safeguarding lead should also consider if it would be appropriate to share any additional information with the new setting in advance of a child leaving to help them put in place the right support to safeguard this child and to help the child thrive in the setting. For example, information that would allow the new setting to continue supporting children who have had a social worker and been victims of abuse and have that support in place for when the child arrives.

Raising Awareness

The designated safeguarding lead should:

- ensure each member of staff has access to, and understands, the setting's child protection policy and procedures, especially new and part-time staff
- ensure the settings child protection policy is reviewed annually (as a minimum) and the procedures and implementation are updated and reviewed regularly, and work with staff and proprietors regarding this
- ensure the child protection policy is available publicly and parents know that referrals about suspected abuse or neglect may be made and the role of the setting in this

- link with the safeguarding partner arrangements to make sure staff are aware of any training opportunities and the latest local policies on local safeguarding arrangements
- help promote educational outcomes by sharing the information about the welfare, safeguarding and child protection issues that children who have or have had a social worker are experiencing with staff.

Training, knowledge and skills

The designated safeguarding lead (and any deputies) should undergo training to provide them with the knowledge and skills required to carry out the role. This training should be updated at least every two years. The designated safeguarding lead (and any deputies) should undertake Prevent awareness training. Training should provide designated safeguarding leads with a good understanding of their own role, how to identify, understand and respond to specific needs that can increase the vulnerability of children, as well as specific harms that can put children at risk, and the processes, procedures and responsibilities of other agencies, particularly local authority children's social care, so they:

- understand the assessment process for providing early help and statutory intervention, including local criteria for action and local authority children's social care referral arrangements
- have a working knowledge of how local authorities conduct a child protection case conference and a child protection review conference and be able to attend and contribute to these effectively when required to do so
- understand the importance of the role the designated safeguarding lead has in providing information and support to local authority children social care in order to safeguard and promote the welfare of children
- understand the lasting impact that adversity and trauma can have, including on children's behaviour, mental health and wellbeing, and what is needed in responding to this in promoting educational outcomes
- are alert to the specific needs of children in need, those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), those with relevant health conditions and young carers
- understand the importance of information sharing, with other agencies, organisations and practitioners
- understand and support with regards to the requirements of the Prevent duty and are able to provide advice and support to staff on protecting children from the risk of radicalisation
- are able to understand the unique risks associated with online safety and be confident that they have the relevant knowledge and up to date capability required to keep children safe whilst they are online
- can recognise the additional risks that children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) face online, for example, from bullying, grooming and radicalisation and are confident they have the capability to support children with SEND to stay safe online
- obtain access to resources and attend any relevant or refresher training courses, and
- encourage a culture of listening to children and taking account of their wishes and feelings, among all staff, in any measures the setting may put in place to protect them.

In addition to the formal training set out above, their knowledge and skills should be refreshed (this might be via e-bulletins, meeting other designated safeguarding leads, or simply taking time to read and digest safeguarding developments) at regular intervals, as required, and at least annually, to allow them to understand and keep up with any developments relevant to their role.

Providing support to staff

Training should support the designated safeguarding lead in developing expertise, so they can support and advise staff and help them feel confident on welfare, safeguarding and child protection matters. This includes specifically to:

- ensure that staff are supported during the referrals processes, and
- support staff to consider how safeguarding, welfare and educational outcomes are linked, including to inform the provision of support.

Understanding the views of children

It is important that all children feel heard and understood. Therefore, designated safeguarding leads (and deputies) should be supported in developing knowledge and skills to:

- encourage a culture of listening to children and taking account of their wishes and feelings, among all staff, and in any measures the setting may put in place to protect them, and,
- understand the difficulties that children may have in approaching staff about their circumstances and consider how to build trusted relationships which facilitate communication.

Holding and sharing information

The critical importance of recording, holding, using and sharing information effectively is set out in this policy, and therefore the designated safeguarding lead should be equipped to:

- understand the importance of information sharing, both within the setting, and with other settings and on transferring to school, and with the safeguarding partners, other agencies, organisations and practitioners
- understand relevant data protection legislation and regulations, especially the Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR), and
- be able to keep detailed, accurate, secure written records of concerns and referrals and understand the purpose of this record-keeping.

The role of the designated members of staff is to manage referrals and concerns regarding individual children.

The designated member of staff for child protection at Little Stars are:

Daniela Scappatura / Gracie Griffith

The senior designated member of staff for child protection and SENCo at Little Stars are:

Heather Seales / Rebecca Smith

All Adults, have a duty to refer all known or suspected cases of abuse to the relevant agency including Integrated Front Door - IFD (Previously known as MASH - Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub), Children and Young Peoples Service (CYPS) – Social Care, or the Police. Where a disclosure is made to a visiting staff member from a different agency, e.g. Early Years Consultants, Health Visitors, it is the responsibility of that agency staff to formally report the referral to the Setting's Designated Person in the first instance. Any records made should be kept securely on the Child's Protection file.

New single phone number Integrated Front Door (MASH) and email for concerns about children and young people

A single telephone number and email address for use by professionals and the public for all concerns relating to children, regardless of risk and complexity.

This is a new simplify the process for the public and professionals and has been designed to ensure that children's need are reviewed quickly by a joined up Early Help and Social Care Team.

Telephone Number 01403 229900

Email address WSChildrenservices@westsussex.gov.uk

Raising Awareness and other duties

The Designated Safeguarding Lead should ensure the Pre School's policies are known and used appropriately: ensuring each member of staff has access to and understands the Pre School's child protection policy and procedures, especially new and part time staff. In addition, the DSL should ensure

that all staff need to know about and understand updated guidance on Keeping Children Safe in Education September 2025.

All staff have received, read, understood and signed to receive Part 1 of Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025.

Procedures Little Stars Pre School adheres to the West Sussex Local Authority Safeguarding Children Procedures. The full procedures and additional guidance relating to specific safeguarding issues can be found on the West Sussex LA website <https://www.westsussexscp.org.uk>

If any member of staff is concerned about a child, he or she must inform the DSL, or deputy DSL, IMMEDIATELY by filling in a "cause of concern form" which are available in the kitchen cupboard or office. This applies to all safeguarding concerns including Radicalisation and Extremism, Sexual Exploitation, Female Genital Mutilation, Forced Marriages etc.

The member of staff must record information regarding the concerns IMMEDIATELY. The recording must be a clear, precise, factual account of the observations and must include the date and time. Do not add comments or opinion although observations about a child's demeanour or emotional state may be recorded. Staff should be aware this may be used as evidence in court. Where there are concerns about bruising or other body marks, it should be recorded on a body map form and included with the concern form.

The designated safeguarding lead should always be available to discuss safeguarding concerns. If in exceptional circumstances, the designated safeguarding lead is not available, this should not delay appropriate action being taken. Staff should consider speaking to a member of the senior team and/or take advice from local children's social care. In these circumstances, any action taken should be shared with the designated safeguarding lead (or deputy) as soon as is practically possible.

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 effective identification, assessment, and allocation of appropriate service provision.

[Information Sharing: Advice for Practitioners Providing Safeguarding Services to Children, Young People, Parents and Carers](#) supports staff who must make decisions about sharing information. Fears about sharing information **must not** be allowed to stand in the way of the need to promote the welfare and protect the safety of children.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead will then:

- The Designated Safeguarding Lead will decide whether the concerns should be referred to the relevant agency. If it is decided to make a referral, this will be discussed with the parents, unless to do so would place the child at further risk of harm.

- Particular attention will be paid to the attendance and development of any child about whom the Pre School has concerns, or who has been identified as being the subject of a child protection plan and a written record will be kept.

- If a child who is/or has been the subject of a child protection plan changes Pre School the Designated Safeguarding Lead will inform the social worker responsible for the case and transfer the appropriate records to the Designated Safeguarding Lead at the receiving school, in a secure manner, and separate from the child's academic file. A receipt of this transfer should be sent with the file, signed by the receiving school and returned to the former Pre School to be filed with the confidential records.

- The Designated Safeguarding Lead is responsible for making the senior leadership team aware of trends in behaviour that may affect child welfare. If necessary, training will be arranged.

- Staff have a duty to refer safeguarding concerns to the Designated Safeguarding Lead. However, if:

 - concerns are not taken seriously by an organisation or

 - action to safeguard the child is not taken by professionals and the child is considered to be at continuing risk of harm

Where the Pre School is concerned about the response from the Local Authority, schools should use the Local Authority published escalation policy and the Director and West Sussex “Yvonne Branchfield or Anna Parsons” should be immediately informed.

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

A statutory duty is placed upon staff and health care professionals to personally report to the police where they discover that FGM appears to have been carried out on a girl under 18 years of age. Those failing to report cases will face disciplinary sanctions. Staff should **never** examine children and should seek support from the DSL as to the procedures for reporting this information.

Where appropriate and where advised by safeguarding professionals (e.g. Integrated Front Door - IFD / MASH/ LADO) parents /carers will be made aware of the concerns for their child at the earliest possible stage. This communication will be made by a DSL or a specific staff member nominated.

Children suffering or likely to suffer significant harm

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, including all forms of abuse and neglect, female genital mutilation or other so-called honour based violence, and extra-familial threats like radicalisation and sexual exploitation.

The online tool [Report Child Abuse to Your Local Council](#) directs to the relevant local children’s social care contact number

What will the local authority do?

Within one working day of a referral being made, a local authority social worker should acknowledge 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; the child is in need, and should be assessed under section 17 of the Children Act 1989; 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; any services are required by the child and family and what type of services; further specialist assessments are required to help the local authority to decide what further action to take; and to see the child as soon as possible if the decision is taken that the referral requires further assessment.

The referrer should follow up if this information is not forthcoming everything, they can to support that assessment supported by the designated safeguarding lead.

If social workers decide to carry out a statutory assessment

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.

Multi-agency working

Pre Schools colleagues have a pivotal role to play in multi-agency safeguarding arrangements. Proprietors should ensure that the setting contributes to multi-agency working in line with statutory guidance [Working Together to Safeguard Children](#).

New safeguarding partners and child death review partner arrangements are now in place. Locally, the three safeguarding partners (the local authority; a clinical commissioning group for an area within the local 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.

It is especially important that provisions understand their role in the three safeguarding partner arrangements. Proprietors and their senior leadership teams, especially their designated safeguarding leads, should make themselves aware of and follow their local arrangements.

The three 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. Relevant agencies are those organisations and agencies whose involvement that the three safeguarding partners consider may be required to safeguard and promote the welfare of children with regard to local need. The three safeguarding partners will have 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.

The three safeguarding partners should make arrangements to allow all provisions in the local area to be fully engaged, involved and included in safeguarding arrangements. It is expected that, locally, the three safeguarding partners will name provisions as relevant agencies and will reach their own conclusions on the best way to achieve the active engagement with individual institutions in a meaningful way. If named as a relevant agency, provisions, in the same way as other relevant agencies, are under a statutory duty to co-operate with the published arrangements.

Provisions should work with 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 early 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. All provisions should allow access for 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

Information sharing is vital in identifying and tackling all forms of abuse and neglect. As part of meeting a child's needs, it is important for proprietors to recognise the importance of information sharing between practitioners and local agencies. This should include ensuring arrangements are in place that set out clearly the processes and principles for sharing information within the provision and with the three safeguarding partners, other organisations, agencies and practitioners as required. Provision 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 the local authority children's social care.

It is important that governing bodies and proprietors are aware that among other obligations, the Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) place duties on organisations and individuals to process personal information fairly and lawfully and to keep the information they hold safe and secure.

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 Act 2018 and the GDPR. 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 practitioners to share special category personal data. This includes allowing practitioners to share information without consent where there is good reason to do so, and that the sharing of information will enhance the safeguarding of a child in a timely manner, but it is not possible to gain consent, it cannot be reasonably expected that a practitioner gains consent, or if to gain consent would place a child at risk.

For provisions, not providing children's personal data where the serious harm test under the legislation is met. For example, in a situation where a child is in a refuge or another form of emergency accommodation, and the serious harms test is met, they must withhold providing the data in compliance with Pre Schools' obligations under the Data Protection Act 2018 and the GDPR. Where in doubt schools should seek independent legal advice.

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

The setting will 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 Act 2018 and the UK GDPR.

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 practitioners to share special category personal data. This includes allowing practitioners to share information without consent where there is good reason to do so, and that the sharing of information will enhance the safeguarding of a child in a timely manner. It would be legitimate to share information without consent where: it is not possible to gain consent; it cannot be reasonably expected that a practitioner gains consent; and, if to gain consent would place a child at risk, and
- for the setting, not providing children's personal data where the serious harm test under the legislation is met. 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 Act 2018 and the UK GDPR. Where in doubt the DSL should seek independent legal advice.

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

Further details on information sharing can be found:

- in Chapter one of [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 seven golden rules for sharing information will be especially useful

- at [The Information Commissioner's Office \(ICO\)](#), which includes information about your obligations and how to comply, including protecting personal information, and providing access to official information
- in [Data protection: toolkit for schools](#) - Guidance to support schools with data protection activity, including compliance with the UK GDPR.

Where children leave the setting, the DSL should ensure their child protection file is transferred to the new setting or school 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 setting 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/new settings, this should be transferred separately from the child's main file. Receiving settings/ schools should ensure key staff such as designated safeguarding leads and special educational needs co-ordinators (SENCO's) or the named persons with oversight for special educational needs and disability (SEND) in a college, are aware as required.

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 setting or school in advance of a child leaving. For example, information that would allow the new setting or school 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.

Opportunities to teach safeguarding

Staff should ensure that children are taught about safeguarding about how to keep themselves safe, including online safety. Pre Schools should consider this as part of providing a broad and balanced curriculum. It should be recognised that effective education will be tailored to the specific needs and vulnerabilities of individual children, including children who are victims of abuse, and children with special educational needs and / or disabilities.

When to be concerned about a child:

ALL staff, students, volunteers to be aware of the main categories of abuse:

Abuse: A form of maltreatment of a child. Someone may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. They may be abused by an adult or another child.

Physical abuse: A form of abuse which may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scolding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent/carer fabricates the symptoms of or deliberately induces, illness in a child.

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 in so far as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or making fun of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond a child's developmental capability as well as over protecting and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the participating in normal social interaction, it may involve seeing or hearing the ill treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyber bullying) 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.

Sexual abuse: Involves forcing or enticing 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, including assault by penetration (rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing or touching outside the clothing. They may include non contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in production of sexual images, watching sexual

activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (via internet) by establishing a close relationship or friendship. Sexual abuse is solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit sexual abuse, as can children.

Neglect: The persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born neglect may involve a parent/carer failing to provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home and abandonment) protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger, ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care givers) or ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of or unresponsive to a child's basic emotional needs.

Other aspects of risk requiring special attention: In addition staff should be aware of the specific safeguarding issues listed below, where risks may be more likely, staff are guided on how to understand and act accordingly where there is concern about:

- Child sexual exploitation
- Bullying
- Domestic Violence
- Drugs
- Fabricated or induced illness
- Faith abuse
- Female genital mutilation
- Forced marriage
- Gangs and youth violence
- Gender based violence/violence against women and girls
- Mental Health
- Private fostering
- Preventing Radicalization
- Sexting
- Teenage relationship abuse
- Trafficking
- Self-harm

Confidentiality

As a general principle all matters relating to child protection are confidential and should only be shared on a need to know basis

All staff must be aware they cannot promise to keep a child's secret as it may compromise the child's safety and well-being.

The Pre School recognises that all matters relating to child protection are confidential. The Director or DSL will only disclose information about a child to other members of staff on a 'need to know' basis.

All members of staff must be aware that whilst they have duties to keep any information confidential, they also have a professional responsibility to share information with other agencies to safeguard children.

All staff must be aware that they cannot promise a child to keep secrets which might compromise the child's safety or wellbeing.

Dealing with a disclosure

If a child discloses then you must ensure that the child is safe and immediately report it.

If a child discloses that he or she has been abused in some way the member of staff or volunteer should:

- accept what the child says
- stay calm, the pace should be dictated by the child without them being pressed for detail by asking leading questions such as "did x touch you there?" It is our role to listen - not to investigate
- use open questions such as "Is there anything else you want to tell me?" or "yes?" or "and?", TED (tell, explain, describe)

- be careful not to burden the child with guilt by asking questions like “Why didn’t you tell me before?” but you could ask ‘have you spoken to anyone else about this?’
- acknowledge how hard it was for the child to tell you
- do not criticise the perpetrator, the child might have a relationship with them
- do not promise confidentiality, but reassure the child that they have done the right thing, explain whom you will have to tell (the designated lead) and why; and, depending on the child’s age, what the next stage will be. It is important that you avoid making promises that you cannot keep such as “I’ll stay with you all the time” or “It will be all right now”

When recording information:

It is important for children to receive the right help at the right time to address risks and prevent issues escalating. Research and serious case reviews have repeatedly shown the dangers of failing to take effective action. Examples of poor practice include:

- 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;
- sharing information too slowly; and
- a lack of challenge to those who appear not to be taking action.

It is important to make:

- Make some brief notes at the time or immediately afterwards; record the date, time, place and context of disclosure or concern. Record facts and what is said but not your assumption or interpretation.
- If it is observation of bruising or an injury try to record detail, e.g. “right arm above elbow” Do not take photographs! Try to record detail using the body map
- Note the non-verbal behaviour and the key words in the language used by the child (try not to translate into ‘proper terms’)
- It is important to keep these original notes and pass them on to the Designated Safeguarding Lead immediately, who may ask you to write a referral.

We recognise that staff working in a Pre School who have become involved with a child who has suffered harm or appears to be likely to suffer harm may find the situation stressful and upsetting. We will support such staff by providing an opportunity to talk through their anxieties with the DSL and to seek further support as appropriate

Allegations against a member of staff

If there is a concern about another member of staff and or the directors, please talk to the designated child protection officer.

If for any reason you feel this is inappropriate you can contact

LADO – Local Authority Designated Officer 0330 222 3339

Whistle blowing See Policy - Any concerns can be report to

LADO 0330 222 3339

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

Little Stars will ensure there are procedures in place to manage **any** safeguarding concerns (no matter how small) or allegations that **do not** meet the harm threshold, about staff members (including

supply staff, volunteers, and contractors). 'Low-level' concerns, should be addressed. The Deputy and senior will review all allegations and refer to the relevant parties, without delay.

The Senior DSL will 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. **This is a legal duty and failure to refer when the criteria are met is a criminal offence.**

Where a staff, including agency, dismisses or ceases to use the services 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).

An allegation is any information which indicates that a member of staff/volunteer may have:

- Behaved in a way that has, or may have harmed a child
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against/related to a child
- Behaved towards a child or children in a way which indicates s/he will pose a risk of harm if they work regularly or closely with children

Behaves in a way that may indicate they are not suitable to work with children

This applies to any child the member of staff/volunteer/agency staff has contact with in their personal, professional or community life.

To reduce the risk of allegations, all staff should be aware of safer working practice and should be familiar with the guidance contained in the staff handbook, School's code of conduct or Government document '*Keeping Children Safe in Education*' Part One 2025. **The Pre School should have a signed acknowledgement from staff members to show that this has occurred.**

All members of staff on the leadership scale must read the entire document - '*Keeping Children Safe in Education*' 2025. **The Pre School should have a signed acknowledgement from these senior staff members to show that this has occurred.**

Any allegation against a staff member should be referred immediately to the Director / DSL. The person to whom an allegation is first reported should take the matter seriously and keep an open mind. S/he should not investigate or ask leading questions if seeking clarification. It is important not to make assumptions. Confidentiality should not be promised, and the person should be advised that the concern will be shared on a 'need to know' basis only.

Actions to be taken include making an immediate written record of the allegation using the informant's words - including time, date and place where the alleged incident took place, brief details of what happened, what was said and who was present. This record should be signed, dated and immediately passed on to the Manager and/or DSL, who should immediately contact the LADO.

The recipient of an allegation must **not** unilaterally determine its validity, and failure to report it in accordance with procedures is a potential disciplinary matter. The Head will not investigate the allegation itself, or take written or detailed statements, but will refer the concern to the Local Authority Designated Officer.

Should the LADO deem the allegation is worthy of further investigation, the Pre School should take direction and follow instructions from the LADO.

If, at the completion of the allegations management process, a Pre School dismisses an individual (or would have, had the person not left first) because the person poses a risk of harm to children, the organisation must make a referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service. It is an offence to fail to make a referral without good reason.

If it is decided that the allegation does not meet the threshold for safeguarding, or once the Pre School has been advised that all Social Services and/or Police investigations have been concluded, it will be handed back to the employer for consideration via the Pre School's internal procedures.

Provisions as employers have a duty of care to their employees. They should ensure they provide effective support for anyone facing an allegation and provide them with a named contact if they are suspended. Where the setting is not the employer of an individual they still have responsibility to

ensure allegations are dealt with appropriately and that they liaise with relevant parties. It is essential that any allegation of abuse made against staff or volunteer and is dealt with very quickly, in a fair and consistent way that provides effective protection for the child and, at the same time supports the person who is the subject of the allegation.

Allegations against staff who is no longer in an educational provision should be referred to the police. Historical allegations of abuse should also be referred to the police.

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 guidance on whistleblowing can be found via: [Advice on Whistleblowing](#)
- the NSPCC's [what you can do to report abuse dedicated helpline](#) 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

If staff have a safeguarding concern or an allegation about another member of staff and how it was handled. Staff can call 0800 028 0285 – line is available from 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM, Monday to Friday and email: help@nspcc.org.uk.

Initial considerations

The procedures for dealing with allegations need to be applied with common sense and judgement. Many cases may well either not meet the criteria set out above, or may do so without warranting consideration of either a police investigation or enquiries by local authority children's social care services, and LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer). In these cases, local arrangements should be followed to resolve cases without delay.

Some rare allegations will be so serious they require immediate intervention by children's social care services/LADO and/or police. The designated officer(s) should be informed of all allegations that come to a provisions attention and appear to meet the criteria so they can consult police and children's social care services as appropriate.

The following definitions should be used when determining the outcome of allegation investigations:

- **Substantiated:** there is sufficient evidence to prove the allegation;
- **Malicious:** there is sufficient evidence to disprove the allegation and there has been a deliberate act to deceive;
- **False:** there is sufficient evidence to disprove the allegation;
- **Unsubstantiated:** there is insufficient evidence to either prove or disprove the allegation. The term, therefore, does not imply guilt or innocence;
- **Unfounded:** to reflect cases where there is no evidence or proper basis which supports the allegation being made.

The proprietor should discuss the allegation immediately with the designated officer(s). The purpose of an initial discussion is for the designated officer(s) and the case manager to consider the nature, content and context of the allegation and agree a course of action. The designated officer(s) may ask the case manager to provide or obtain relevant additional information, such as previous history, whether the child or their family have made similar allegations previously and about the individual's current contact with children. There may be situations when the case manager will want to involve the police immediately, for example if the person is deemed to be an immediate risk to children or there is evidence of a possible criminal offence. Where there is no such evidence, the case manager should discuss the allegations with the designated officer(s) in order to help determine whether police involvement is necessary.

The initial sharing of information and evaluation may lead to a decision that no further action is to be taken in regard to the individual facing the allegation or concern, in which case this decision and a justification for it should be recorded by both the case manager and the designated officer(s), and agreement reached on what information should be put in writing to the individual concerned and by whom. The case manager should then consider with the designated officer(s) what action should follow both in respect of the individual and those who made the initial allegation.

The case manager should inform the accused person about the allegation as soon as possible after consulting the designated officer(s). It is extremely important that the case manager provides them with as much information as possible at that time.

However, where a strategy discussion is needed, or police or children's social care services need to be involved, the case manager should not do that until those agencies have been consulted and have agreed what information can be disclosed to the accused. Employers must consider carefully whether the circumstances of a case warrant a person being suspended from contact with children at the provision or whether alternative arrangements can be put in place until the allegation or concern is resolved. All options to avoid suspension should be considered prior to taking that step

If there is cause to suspect a child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm, a strategy discussion should be convened in accordance with the statutory guidance [Working Together to Safeguard Children](#). If the allegation is about physical contact, the strategy discussion or initial evaluation with the police should take into account that staff and other colleagues are entitled to use reasonable force to control or restrain children in certain circumstances, including dealing with disruptive behaviour.

Where it is clear that an investigation by the police or children's social care services is unnecessary, or the strategy discussion or initial evaluation decides that is the case, the designated officer(s) should discuss the next steps with the case manager. In those circumstances, the options open to the Pre School depend on the nature and circumstances of the allegation and the evidence and information available. This will range from taking no further action to dismissal or a decision not to use the person's services in future. Suspension should not be the default position: an individual should be suspended only if there is no reasonable alternative.

In some cases, further enquiries will be needed to enable a decision about how to proceed. If so, the designated officer(s) should discuss with the case manager how and by whom the investigation will be undertaken. In straightforward cases, the investigation should normally be undertaken by a senior member staff.

However, in other circumstances, such as lack of appropriate resource within the provision, or the nature or complexity of the allegation, the allegation will require an independent investigator. Many local authorities already provide for an independent investigation of allegations, often as part of the personnel services that maintained provision can buy in from the authority. It is important that local authorities ensure that provisions have access to an affordable facility for independent investigation where that is appropriate.

Supporting those involved

Little Stars has a duty of care to their employees. They should act to manage and minimise the stress inherent in the allegations process. Support for the individual is vital to fulfilling this duty. Individuals should be informed of concerns or allegations as soon as possible and given an explanation of the likely course of action, unless there is an objection by the children's social care services or the police. The individual should be advised to contact their trade union representative, if they have one, or a colleague for support. They should also be given access to welfare counselling or medical advice where this is provided by the employer.

The case manager should appoint a named representative to keep the person who is the subject of the allegation informed of the progress of the case and consider what other support is appropriate for the individual. For staff in maintained provisions, that may include support via the local authority occupational health or employee welfare arrangements. Particular care needs to be taken when employees are suspended to ensure that they are kept informed of both the progress of their case and current work-related issues. Social contact with colleagues and friends should not be prevented unless there is evidence to suggest that such contact is likely to be prejudicial to the gathering and presentation of evidence.

Parents or carers of the child or children involved should be told about the allegation as soon as possible if they do not already know of it. However, where a strategy discussion is required, or police or children's social care services need to be involved, the case manager should not do so until those agencies have been consulted and have agreed what information can be disclosed to the parents or carers. Parents or carers should also be kept informed about the progress of the case, and told the outcome where there is not a criminal prosecution, including the outcome of any disciplinary process. The deliberations of a disciplinary hearing, and the information taken into account in reaching a decision, cannot normally be disclosed but the parents or carers of the child should be told the outcome in confidence.

Parents and carers should also be made aware of the requirement to maintain confidentiality about any allegations made against teachers whilst investigations are ongoing as set out in the Education Act 2002. If parents or carers wish to apply to the court to have reporting restrictions removed, they should be told to seek legal advice.

In cases where a child may have suffered significant harm, or there may be a criminal prosecution, children's social care services, or the police as appropriate, should consider what support the child or children involved may need.

Duty to refer to the Disclosure and Barring Service

When an allegation is made an investigation should be carried out to gather enough evidence to establish if it has foundation, and employers should ensure they have sufficient information to meet the referral duty criteria explained in the DBS referral guidance, which can be found on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).

There is a legal requirement to make a referral to the DBS where they remove an individual from regulated activity (or would have removed an individual had they not left), and they believe the individual has:

- engaged in relevant conduct in relation to children and/or adults, and/or
- satisfied the harm test in relation to children and/or vulnerable adults, and/or
- been cautioned or convicted of a relevant (automatic barring either with or without the right to make representations) offence.

The DBS will consider whether to bar the person. Detailed guidance on when to refer to the DBS (including what is the harm test and relevant conduct), and what information **must** be provided, can be found on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).

Referrals should be made as soon as possible when an individual is removed from regulated activity. This could include when an individual is suspended, redeployed to work that is not regulated activity, dismissed or when they have resigned. It is important that as much relevant information is provided to the DBS as possible, as it relies on the quality of information provided by the school or college when considering the referral made. them.

Safeguarding concerns and allegations made about staff, including supply staff, volunteers, and contractors

The setting will follow advice from EYCA and LADO for dealing with safeguarding concerns or allegations against those working in or on behalf of the setting in a paid or unpaid capacity, this includes, members of staff, supply teachers, volunteers and contractors.

This part has two sections covering the two levels of allegation/concern:

1. Allegations that **may** meet the harm threshold.
2. Allegations/concerns that **do not** meet the harm threshold—referred to for the purposes of this guidance as ‘low-level concerns’.

These procedures are consistent with local safeguarding procedures and practice guidance.

Allegations that may meet the harm threshold

This part is about managing cases of allegations that might indicate a person would pose a risk of harm if they continue to work in their present position, or in any capacity with children in the setting. This guidance should be followed where it is alleged that anyone working in the setting that provides education for children under 18 years of age, including agency, volunteers and contractors has:

- **behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child and/or**
- **possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child, and/or**
- **behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates he or she may pose a risk of harm to children, and/or**
- **behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children.**

The last bullet point above includes behaviour that may have happened outside the provision, that might make an individual unsuitable to work with children, this is known as transferable risk.

Where appropriate an assessment of transferable risk to children with whom the person works should be undertaken. If in doubt seek advice from the local authority designated officer (LADO).

It is important that we make clear to whom allegations should be reported and that this should be done without delay. A “case manager” will lead any investigation. This will be either the senior or deputy, or, where the senior is the subject of an allegation, the director of the proprietor.

The initial response to an allegation

Where Little Stars as a setting identify a child has been harmed, that there may be an immediate risk of harm to a child or if the situation is an emergency, they should contact local authority children’s social care and as appropriate the police immediately as per the processes explained in Part one of this guidance.

There are two aspects to consider when an allegation is made:

- **Looking after the welfare of the child** - the designated safeguarding lead (or deputy) is responsible for ensuring that the child is not at risk and referring cases of suspected abuse to the local authority children’s social care as described in KCSiE guidance.
- **Investigating and supporting the person subject to the allegation** - the case manager should discuss with the LADO, the nature, content and context of the allegation, and agree a course of action.

When dealing with allegations, the setting should:

- apply common sense and judgement
- deal with allegations quickly, fairly and consistently, and
- provide effective protection for the child and support the person subject to the allegation.

Little Stars will ensure they understand the local authority arrangements for managing allegations, including the contact details and what information the LADO will require when an allegation is made. Before contacting the LADO, the case manager should conduct basic enquiries in line with local procedures to establish the facts and to help them determine whether there is any foundation to the allegation, being careful not to jeopardise any future police investigation. For example:

- was the individual in the care of the setting at the time of the allegations
- did the individual, or could the individual have come into contact with the child
- are there any witnesses, and
- was there any CCTV footage?

These are just a sample of example questions. The case manager should be familiar with what initial information the LADO will require. This information can be found in local policy and procedural guidance provided by the LADO service.

When to inform the individual of the allegation should be considered carefully on a case-by-case basis, with guidance as required from the LADO, and if appropriate local authority children's social care and the police.

If there is cause to suspect a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer significant harm, a strategy discussion involving the police and/or local authority children's social care will be convened in accordance with the statutory guidance [Working Together to Safeguard Children](#). If the allegation is about physical contact, for example restraint, the strategy discussion or initial evaluation with the LADO should take into account that staff are entitled to use reasonable force to control or restrain children in certain circumstances, including dealing with disruptive behaviour. Further information about the use of reasonable force can be found in this document

Where the case manager is concerned about the welfare of other children in the community or the member of staff's family, they should discuss these concerns with the designated safeguarding lead (or deputy) and make a risk assessment of the situation. It may be necessary for the designated safeguarding lead to make a referral to local authority children's social care.

Where it is clear that an investigation by the police or local authority children's social care is unnecessary, or the strategy discussion or initial assessment decides that is the case, the LADO should discuss the next steps with the case manager.

No further action

Where the initial discussion leads to no further action, the case manager and the LADO should:

- record the decision and justification for it, and
- agree on what information should be put in writing to the individual concerned and by whom.

Further enquiries

Where further enquiries are required to enable a decision about how to proceed, the LADO and case manager should discuss how and by whom the investigation will be undertaken. The LADO will provide advice and guidance, when considering allegations against adults working with children. The LADO's role is not to investigate the allegation, but to ensure that an appropriate investigation is

carried out, whether that is by the police, local authority children's social care, the setting, or a combination of these. In straightforward cases, the investigation should normally be undertaken by a senior member of staff.

Where there is a lack of appropriate resource, or the nature or complexity of the allegation requires it, the allegation will require an independent investigator.. It is important that local authorities ensure that the provision in that area have access to an affordable facility for independent investigation where that is appropriate.

The case manager should monitor the progress of cases to ensure that they are dealt with as quickly as possible in a thorough and fair process. Wherever possible, the first review should take place no later than four weeks after the initial assessment.

Dates for subsequent reviews, ideally at fortnightly (and no longer than monthly) intervals, should be set at the review meeting if the investigation continues.

Agency and all contracted staff

In some circumstances the setting will have to consider an allegation against an individual not directly employed by them, where its disciplinary procedures do not fully apply because agencies will have their own policies and procedures; for example, supply staff provided by an employment agency or business.

Whilst Little Stars is not the employer of supply staff, they should ensure allegations are dealt with properly. **In no circumstances** should we decide to cease to use a supply staff due to safeguarding concerns, without finding out the facts and liaising with the LADO to determine a suitable outcome. Proprietors should discuss with the supply agency where the supply staff is working across a number of provisions, whether it is appropriate to suspend the supply staff, or redeploy them to another site, whilst they carry out their investigation.

LADO, police and/or local authority children's social care. The setting will usually take the lead because agencies do not have direct access to children or other staff, so they will not be able to collect the facts when an allegation is made, nor do they have all the relevant information required by the LADO as part of the referral process. Supply staff, whilst not employed by the provision, are under the supervision, direction and control of the proprietor when working in the setting. They should be advised to contact their trade union representative if they have one, or a colleague for support. The allegations management meeting which is often arranged by the LADO should address issues such as information sharing, to ensure that any previous concerns or allegations known to the agency are considered by the setting during the investigation.

When using a supply agency, the provision should inform the agency of the process for managing allegations but also take account of the agency's policies and the duty placed on agencies to refer to the DBS as personnel suppliers. This should include inviting the agency's human resource manager or equivalent to meetings and keeping them up to date with information about its policies.

Suspension

Suspension should not be an automatic response when an allegation is reported. All options to avoid suspension should be considered prior to taking that step. The case manager **must** consider carefully whether the circumstances warrant suspension from contact with children at the provision, until the allegation is resolved. It should be considered only in cases where there is cause to suspect a child or other children is/are at risk of harm, or the case is so serious that there might be grounds for dismissal. If in doubt, the case manager should seek views from their personnel adviser and the LADO, as well as the police and local authority children's social care where they have been involved. In many cases, an inquiry can be resolved quickly.

Little Stars as an employer will decide on whether the individual should continue to work at the setting, based on consultation with the LADO who will provide relevant information received from the police or local authority children's social care on whether they have any objections to the member of staff continuing to work during the investigation of the case.

Based on advice and/or a risk analysis drawn up with the LADO, the following alternatives should be considered by the case manager before suspending a member of staff:

- redeployment so that the individual does not have direct contact with the child or children concerned
- providing an assistant to be present when the individual has contact with children
- redeploying to alternative work so the individual does not have unsupervised access to children
- moving the child or children to classes where they will not come into contact with the member of staff, but this decision should only be made if it is in the best interest of the child or children concerned and takes accounts of their views. It should be made making it clear that this is not a punishment and parents have been consulted, or
- temporarily redeploying the member of staff to another role

These alternatives allow time for an informed decision regarding the suspension, this will, however, depend upon the nature of the allegation. The case manager should consider the potential permanent professional reputational damage to employees that can result from suspension where an allegation is later found to be unfounded, unsubstantiated, malicious, or false.

If immediate suspension is considered necessary, the case manager should record the rationale and justification for such a course of action. This should also include what alternatives to suspension have been considered and why they were rejected.

Where it has been deemed appropriate to suspend the person, written confirmation should be given within one working day, giving as much detail as appropriate for the reasons for the suspension. It is not acceptable for an employer to leave a person who has been suspended without any support. The person should be informed at the point of their suspension who their named contact is within the organisation and provided with their contact details.

Local authority children's social care or the police may give their view to the LADO but they cannot require the case manager to suspend a member of staff or the removal of a volunteer, although the case manager should give appropriate weight to their views.

The power to suspend is vested in the proprietor who are the employers. However, where a strategy discussion, or initial assessment, concludes that there should be enquiries by local authority children's social care, and/or an investigation by the police, the LADO should canvass police and local authority children's social care for views about whether the accused member of staff should be suspended from contact with children. Police involvement does not make it mandatory to suspend a member of staff; this decision should be taken on a case-by-case basis having undertaken a risk assessment about whether the person poses a risk of harm to children.

Supporting those involved - Duty of care

The welfare of a child is paramount (how children should be protected and supported) and this will be the prime concern in terms of investigating an allegation against a person in a position of trust. However, when an allegation or safeguarding concern is being investigated it is likely to be a very stressful experience for the adult subject to the investigation, and potentially for their family members. It is important that an employer offers appropriate welfare support at such a time and recognises the sensitivity of the situation. Information is confidential and should not ordinarily be shared with other staff or with children or parents who are not directly involved in the investigation.

Little Stars as the employer has a duty of care to their employees. They should:

- manage and minimise the stress caused by the allegation
- inform the individual as soon as possible, explaining the likely course of action, guided by the LADO, and the police where necessary
- advise the individual, or a colleague for support
- appoint a named representative to keep the person informed about the progress of the case
- provide access to counselling or medical advice where appropriate,
- not prevent social contact with work colleagues and friends, when staff are suspended, unless there is evidence to suggest this may prejudice the gathering of evidence.

Parents or carers of the child or children involved should be:

- formally told about the allegation as soon as possible. The case manager should consult the LADO and where involved local authority children's social care and/or the police on what information can be disclosed
- kept informed about the progress of the case, only in relation to their child - no information can be shared regarding the staff member, and,
- made aware of the requirement to maintain confidentiality and unwanted publicity about any allegations made against staff whilst investigations are in progress as set out in the Education Act 2002.

Confidentiality and Information sharing

In an allegations management meeting or during the initial assessment of the case, the agencies involved should share all relevant information they have about the person who is the subject of the allegation, and about the alleged victim, see paragraphs 114-122 in Part two KCSiE 2025 about information sharing.

Where the police are involved, wherever possible the setting should ask the police to obtain consent from the individuals involved to share their statements and evidence for use in the employer's disciplinary process. This should be done as their investigation proceeds and will enable the police to share relevant information without delaying the conclusion of their investigation or any court case.

Local authority children's social care should adopt a similar procedure when making enquiries to determine whether the child or children named in the allegation are in need of protection or services, so that any information obtained in the course of those enquiries which is relevant to a disciplinary case can be passed to the employer without delay.

Little Stars **must** make every effort to maintain confidentiality and guard against unwanted publicity while an allegation is being investigated or considered. The Education Act 2011 amended the Education Act 2002, to introduce reporting restrictions. These provisions made it an offence (except in the limited circumstance expressly permitted by the legislation), for any person to publish any

material that may lead to the identification of staff who has been accused by, or on behalf of, a child (where that identification would identify the staff as the subject of the allegation).

The reporting restrictions apply until:

In deciding what information is disclosed, careful consideration should be given to the provisions of the Data Protection Act 2018, the law of confidence and, where relevant, the Human Rights Act 1998.

- the point that the accused person is charged with a relevant offence, or
- the Secretary of State publishes information about an investigation or decision in a disciplinary case arising from the allegation.

The reporting restrictions are disapplied if the individual to whom the restrictions apply effectively waives their right to anonymity by going public themselves or by giving their written consent for another to do so or if a court lifts the reporting restrictions in response to a request to do so.

The legislation prevents the “publication” of material by any person that may lead to the identification of the teacher who is the subject of the allegation. “Publication” includes “any speech, writing, relevant programme or other communication in whatever form, which is addressed to the public at large or any section of the public.” This means that a parent who, for example, published details of the allegation on a social networking site would be in breach of the reporting restrictions (if what was published could lead to the identification by members of the public). In circumstances where the setting need to make parents aware about an allegation, they should make parents and others aware that there are restrictions on publishing information.

In accordance with the [Authorised Professional Practice published by the College of Policing](#) in May 2017, the police will not normally provide any information to the press or media that might identify an individual who is under investigation, unless and until the person is charged with a criminal offence. In exceptional cases where the police wish to depart from that rule, for example an appeal to trace a suspect, they **must** apply to a magistrates’ court to request that reporting restrictions be lifted.

The case manager should take advice from the LADO, the police and local authority children’s social care to agree the following:

- who needs to know and exactly what information can be shared
- how to manage speculation, leaks and gossip
- what, if any, information can be reasonably given to the wider community to reduce speculation and
- how to manage press interest if, and when, it should arise. [Allegation outcomes](#)

The definitions that should be used when schools and colleges determine the outcome of an allegation are set out below:

- **Substantiated:** there is sufficient evidence to prove the allegation
- **Malicious:** there is sufficient evidence to disprove the allegation and there has been a deliberate act to deceive or cause harm to the person subject of the allegation
- **False:** there is sufficient evidence to disprove the allegation
- **Unsubstantiated:** there is insufficient evidence to either prove or disprove the allegation. The term, therefore, does not imply guilt or innocence, or
- **Unfounded:** to reflect cases where there is no evidence or proper basis which supports the allegation being made.

Ultimately the options open depend on the nature and circumstances of the allegations and the evidence and information available. This will range from taking no further action, to dismissal or a decision not to use the person's services in future.

If the allegation is substantiated and:

- the person is dismissed; resigns, or otherwise ceases to provide his or her services, or
- the employer ceases to use the person's services.

There is a **legal requirement** for employers to make a referral to the DBS where they consider an individual has engaged in conduct that harmed (or is likely to harm) a child; or if a person otherwise poses a risk of harm to a child (KCSIE for further information).

Following a criminal investigation or a prosecution

The police should inform the LADO and the employer immediately when:

- a criminal investigation and any subsequent trial is complete
- it is decided to close an investigation without charge, or Disclosure and Barring Service – guidance on [Referrals to the DBS](#).
- it is decided not to continue to prosecute after the person has been charged.

In those circumstances, during the joint assessment meeting the LADO should discuss with the case manager whether any further action, including disciplinary action, is appropriate and, if so, how to proceed. The information provided by the police and/or local authority children's social care should also inform that decision. The options will depend on the circumstances of the case and the consideration should take into account the result of the police investigation or the trial, as well as the different standard of proof required in disciplinary and criminal proceedings.

Unsubstantiated, unfounded, false or malicious allegations

If an allegation is determined to be unsubstantiated, unfounded, false or malicious, the LADO and the case manager should consider whether the child and/or the person who has made the allegation is in need of help or may have been abused by someone else and this is a cry for help. In such circumstances, a referral to local authority children's social care may be appropriate.

If an allegation is shown to be deliberately invented or malicious, the setting, should consider whether any disciplinary action is appropriate against the individual who made it as per their own behaviour policy.

Returning to work

Where it is decided on the conclusion of a case that a person who has been suspended can return to work, the case manager should consider how best to facilitate that. Guidance and advice are usually provided via LADO. Most people will benefit from some help and support to return to work after a stressful experience. Depending on the individual's circumstances, a phased return and/or the provision of a mentor to provide assistance and support in the short term may be appropriate. The case manager should also consider how the person's contact with the child or children who made the allegation can best be managed if they are still attending the setting.

Managing the situation and exit arrangements

Resignations and 'settlement agreements'

'Settlement agreements' (sometimes referred to as compromise agreements), by which a person agrees to resign if the employer agrees not to pursue disciplinary action and both parties agree a form of words to be used in any future reference, should **not** be used, where there are allegations that indicate the person is a risk or poses a risk of harm to children or deemed not suitable to work with children. Such an agreement will not prevent a thorough police and/or setting investigation where that is appropriate.

Little Stars should not cease their investigations if the person leaves, resigns or ceases to provide their services. It is important that every effort is made to reach a conclusion in all cases of allegations bearing on the safety or welfare of children, including any in which the person concerned refuses to cooperate.

Wherever possible, the accused should be given full opportunity to answer the allegation and make representations about it. The process of recording the allegation and any supporting evidence and reaching a judgement about whether it can be substantiated or otherwise on the basis of all the information available, should continue even if the accused does not cooperate. It may be difficult to reach a conclusion in those circumstances, and it may not be possible to apply any disciplinary sanctions if a person's period of notice expires before the process is complete, but it is important to reach and record an outcome wherever possible. The person concerned should be notified of the conclusion of the allegations and sanctions that might be posed.

Other than where allegations are false, malicious, unsubstantiated, or unfounded, the outcome should be made clear when providing references to prospective employers. This is particularly important where the person moves into another position involving working with children.

It is not appropriate to reach a settlement/compromise agreement if the person subject to the allegation resigns or their services cease to be used. However, in limited circumstances the setting sometimes use settlement agreements to end the employment relationship on agreed terms, but not where there is an allegation that the individual poses a risk to children.

Where a settlement/compromise agreement is used, the setting should not let it prevent the employer from:

- fulfilling their legal duty to refer cases to the DBS where the referral criteria are met –Non-compliance of this duty is a criminal offence, or
- providing a reference to potential employers when requested, or

Record keeping

Details of allegations following an investigation that are found to have been malicious or false should be removed from personnel records, unless the individual gives their consent for retention of the information. However, for all other allegations, i.e. substantiated, unfounded and unsubstantiated it is important that the following information is kept on the file of the person accused:

- a clear and comprehensive summary of the allegation
- details of how the allegation was followed up and resolved
- a note of any action taken, decisions reached and the outcome i.e substantiated, unfounded or unsubstantiated
- a copy provided to the person concerned, where agreed by local authority children's social care or the police, and

- a declaration on whether the information will be referred to in any future reference.

The purpose of the record is to enable accurate information to be given in response to any future request for a reference. It will provide clarification in cases where future DBS checks reveal information from the police about an allegation that did not result in a criminal conviction and it will help to prevent unnecessary re-investigation if, as sometimes happens, an allegation re-surfaces after a period of time.

Little Stars has an obligation to preserve records which contain information about allegations of sexual abuse for the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA), for the term of the inquiry (further information can be found on the [IICSA website](#)). All other records should be retained at least until the accused has reached normal pension age or for a period of 10 years from the date of the allegation if that is longer.

The Information Commissioner has published guidance on employment records in its [Employment Practices Code and supplementary guidance](#), which provides some practical advice on record retention.

References

Cases in which an allegation was found to be false, unfounded, unsubstantiated or malicious should not be included in employer references. Any repeated concerns or allegations which have all been found to be false, unfounded, unsubstantiated or malicious should also not be included in any reference. See KCSiE for further information on references. Substantiated allegations should be included in references, provided that the information is factual and does not include opinions.

Learning lessons

Throughout the process in handling allegations and at conclusion of a case in which an allegation is substantiated, the LADO should review the circumstances of the case with the case manager to determine whether there are any improvements to be made to the setting's procedures to help prevent similar events in the future. This should include issues arising from any decision to suspend the member of staff, the duration of the suspension and whether or not suspension was justified. Lessons should also be learnt from the use of suspension when the individual is subsequently reinstated.

The LADO and case manager should consider how future investigations of similar nature could be carried out without suspending the individual.

For all other cases, where the allegation concluded to be either, unfounded, false, malicious or unsubstantiated the case manager (and if they have been involved the LADO) should consider the facts and determine whether any lessons can be learned and if improvements can be made.

Non recent allegations

Where an adult makes an allegation that they were abused as a child, the individual should be advised to report the allegation to the police. Non recent allegations made by a child, should be reported to the LADO in line with the local authority's procedures for dealing with non-recent allegations. The LADO will coordinate with local authority children social care and the police. Abuse can be reported no matter how long ago it happened.

Concerns and or allegations that do not meet the harm threshold

Processes to deal with any concerns (including allegations) which **do not** meet the harm threshold, referred to as 'low-level' concerns.

Low-level concerns

As part of the whole approach to safeguarding, we ensure that staff promote an open and transparent culture in which **all** concerns about all adults working in or on behalf of (including supply staff, volunteers and contractors) are dealt with promptly and appropriately.

Creating a culture in which **all** concerns about adults are shared responsibly and with the right person, recorded and dealt with appropriately, is critical. If implemented correctly, this should:

- encourage an open and transparent culture
- enable us to identify inappropriate, problematic or concerning behaviour early
- minimise the risk of abuse
- ensure that adults working in or on behalf of the school or college are clear about professional boundaries and act within these boundaries, and in accordance with the ethos and values of the institution.

What is a low-level concern?

The term 'low-level' concern does not mean that it is insignificant. A low-level concern is any concern – no matter how small, and even if no more than causing a sense of unease or a 'nagging doubt' - that an adult working may have acted in a way that:

- is inconsistent with the staff code of conduct, including inappropriate conduct outside of work and
- does not meet the harm threshold or is otherwise not serious enough to consider a referral to the LADO.

Examples of such behaviour could include, but are not limited to:

- being over friendly with children
- having favourites
- taking photographs of children on their mobile phone, contrary to the policy
- engaging with a child on a one-to-one basis in a secluded area or behind a closed door, or
- humiliating staff and children

Such behaviour can exist on a wide spectrum, from the inadvertent or thoughtless, or behaviour that may look to be inappropriate, but might not be in specific circumstances, through to that which is ultimately intended to enable abuse.

Low-level concerns may arise in several ways and from a number of sources. For example: suspicion; complaint; or disclosure made by a child, parent or other adult within or outside of the organisation; or as a result of vetting checks undertaken.

It is crucial that all low-level concerns are shared responsibly with the right person, and recorded and dealt with appropriately. Ensuring they are dealt with effectively should also protect those working on behalf of the setting from becoming the subject of potential false low-level concerns or misunderstandings.

Recording low-level concerns

All low-level concerns should be recorded in writing. The record should include details of the concern, the context in which the concern arose, and action taken. The name of the individual sharing their concerns should also be noted, if the individual wishes to remain anonymous then that should be respected as far as reasonably possible.

Little Stars can decide where these records are kept, but they must be kept confidential, held securely and comply with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR).

Records should be reviewed so that potential patterns of concerning, inappropriate, problematic or concerning behaviour can be identified. Where a pattern of such behaviour is identified, the school or college should decide on a course of action, either through its disciplinary procedures or where a pattern of behaviour moves from a low-level concern to meeting the harm threshold, in which case it should be referred to the LADO. Consideration should also be given to whether there are wider cultural issues within the setting that enabled the behaviour to occur and where appropriate policies could be revised, or extra training delivered to minimise the risk of it happening again.

It is for Little Stars to decide how long they retain such information, it is recommended that it is retained at least until the individual leaves their employment.

References

Low-level concerns should not be included in references unless they relate to issues which would normally be included in a reference, for example, misconduct or poor performance. It follows that a low-level concern which relates exclusively to safeguarding (and not to misconduct or poor performance) should not be referred to in a reference. However, where a low-level concern (or group of concerns) meets the harm threshold for referral to the LADO and found to be substantiated, it should be referred to in a reference.

Responding to low-level concerns

Little Stars low-level concerns should set out responding to reports of low-level concerns. If the concern has been raised via a third party, the senior/manager (or a nominated deputy) should collect as much evidence as possible by speaking:

- directly to the person who raised the concern, unless it has been raised anonymously, and
- to the individual involved and any witnesses.

The information collected will help them to categorise the type of behaviour and determine what further action may need to be taken. This information needs to be recorded in writing along with the rationale for their decisions and action taken.

The management of safeguarding

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 the setting are effective and comply with the law at all times. Ensuring that the policies and procedures, adopted (particularly those concerning referrals of cases of suspected abuse and neglect), are understood, and followed by all staff.

Staff should be aware of their obligations under the Human Rights Act 1998, the Equality Act 2010, (including the Public Sector Equality Duty), and their local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements

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.

Under the HRA, it is unlawful for the setting to act in a way that is incompatible with the Convention. The specific convention rights applying 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: requires that all of the rights and freedoms set out in the Act must be protected and applied without discrimination, and

Protocol 1, Article 2: protects the right to education.

Being subjected to harassment, violence and or abuse, including that if 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 [Human Rights | Equality and Human Rights Commission \(equalityhumanrights.com\)](https://www.equalityhumanrights.com).

Equality Act 2010

Little Stars has obligations under the Equality Act 2010 (the Equality Act) According to the Equality Act, staff **must** not unlawfully discriminate against children because of their sex, race, disability, religion or belief, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, or sexual orientation (protected characteristics).

Whilst all of the above protections are important, in the context of safeguarding, this guidance, and the **legal duties** placed on the setting in relation to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, governing bodies and proprietors should carefully consider how they are supporting their children with regard to particular protected characteristics - including disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment and race.

Provisions within the Equality Act allow the setting to take positive action, where it can be shown that it is proportionate, to deal with particular disadvantages affecting children with a particular protected characteristic in order to meet their specific need, this includes a duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled children and young people, including those with long term conditions. A setting, could, for example, consider taking positive action to support girls if there was evidence they were being disproportionately subjected to sexual violence or sexual harassment.

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 \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/equality-act-2010-advice-for-schools), it may also be useful for colleges. For further information [Equality Act guidance | Equality and Human Rights Commission \(equalityhumanrights.com\)](https://www.equalityhumanrights.com).

Public Sector Equality Duty

The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) is found in the Equality Act. Compliance with the PSED is a legal requirement.

The PSED places a general duty, for the setting to exercise 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 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 and racism. This is one reason why good record-keeping and monitoring of all forms of abuse and harassment is essential.

The PSED helps educational settings (which are subject to it) to focus on key issues of concern and how to improve pupil and student outcomes. Some pupils or students may be more at risk of harm from specific issues such as sexual violence, homophobic, biphobic or transphobic bullying or racial discrimination. Such concerns will differ between education settings, but it is important schools and colleges are conscious of disproportionate vulnerabilities and integrate this into their safeguarding policies and procedures. For further information please see [Technical Guidance on the Public Sector Equality Duty: England | Equality and Human Rights Commission \(equalityhumanrights.com\)](#)

The use of 'reasonable force' in educational settings

There are circumstances when it is appropriate for staff 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 needed'.

The department believes that the adoption of a 'no contact' policy at an educational setting can leave staff unable to fully support and protect their children. The department therefore encourages staff 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.

When using reasonable force in response to risks presented by incidents involving children with SEND, mental health problems or with medical conditions, staff should consider the risks carefully recognise the additional vulnerability of these groups. They should also consider their duties under the Equality Act 2010 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 and carers, and how staff can reduce the occurrence of challenging behaviour and the need to use reasonable force.

- Departmental advice for schools is available at [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.

Early help

What staff should look out for:

Any child may benefit from early help, but staff should particularly be alert to the potential need for early help 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 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 care or from home
- is at risk of modern slavery, trafficking, sexual or criminal exploitation
- is at risk of being radicalised or exploited
- has a family member in prison, 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
- has returned home to their family from care
- is at risk of 'honour'-based abuse such as Female Genital Mutilation or Forced Marriage
- is a privately fostered child, and
- is persistently absent from education, including persistent absences for part of the school day.

If early help is appropriate, the designated safeguarding lead (or deputy) will generally lead on liaising with other agencies and setting up an inter-agency assessment as appropriate. Staff may be required to support other agencies and professionals in an early help assessment, in some cases acting as the lead practitioner. Any such cases should be kept under constant review and consideration given to a referral to children's social care for assessment for statutory services, if the child's situation does not appear to be improving or is getting worse.

Early help assessment

If early help is appropriate, the designated safeguarding lead (or deputy) will generally lead on liaising with other agencies and setting up an inter-agency assessment as appropriate. Staff may be required to support other agencies and professionals in an early help assessment, in some cases acting as the lead practitioner. 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.

Statutory assessments and children's social care assessments and services

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) is made immediately. Referrals should follow the local referral process.

Local authority children's social care assessments should consider where children are being harmed in contexts outside the home, so it is important that the setting 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](#).

The online tool [Report Child Abuse to Your Local Council](#) directs to the relevant local authority children's social care contact number.

Children in need

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.

Children suffering or likely to suffer significant harm:

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 and neglect.

What will the local authority do?

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. Chapter one of [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. Chapter one of [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.

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

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 deputy) as required).

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

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.

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

Why is all of this important?

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 serious case reviews have repeatedly shown the dangers of failing to take effective action. Further information about serious case reviews can be found in Chapter four of [Working Together to Safeguard Children](#). Examples of poor practice include:

- 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.

Children we care for previously looked after children

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

In particular, they should ensure that appropriate staff have 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. 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 lead should have details of the child's social worker and the name of the virtual school head in the authority that looks after the child.

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.

Care leavers

Local authorities have on-going responsibilities to the young people who cease to be looked after and become care leavers. That includes keeping in touch with them, preparing an assessment of their needs and appointing a personal adviser who develops a pathway plan with the young person. This 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 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.

Children with special educational needs and disabilities

Children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities can face additional safeguarding challenges proprietors should ensure their child protection policy reflects the fact that additional barriers can exist when recognising abuse and neglect 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 disability without further exploration
- these children being more prone to peer group isolation or bullying
- children with SEN and disabilities or medical conditions can be disproportionately impacted by things like bullying without outwardly showing any signs
- difficulties may arise in overcoming communication barriers
- cognitive understanding – being able to understand the difference between fact and fiction in online content and the repeating the content/behaviours, or the consequence of doing so

Any reports of abuse involving children with SEND will therefore require close liaison with the designated safeguarding lead (or deputy) and the SENCO or the named person with oversight for SEND.

The setting 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 Department's:

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

And from specialist organisations:

- [Mencap](#) - Represents people with learning disabilities, with specific advice and information for people who work with children and young people
- [Council for disabled children](#) - Every Local area has an information, advice and support service, providing information, advice and support to disabled children and young people, and those with SEND, and their parents. 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 \(councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk\)](#)

Children who are lesbian, gay, bi, or trans (LGBT)

We expect to publish the revised guidance on gender questioning children this summer. If published, we will signpost to this guidance in September 2025.

A child or young person being lesbian, gay, or bisexual is not in itself an inherent risk factor for harm, however, they can sometimes be targeted by other children. 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.

However, the Cass review identified that caution is necessary for children questioning their gender as there remain many unknowns about the impact of social transition and children may well have wider vulnerabilities, including having complex mental health and psychosocial needs, and in some cases additional diagnoses of autism and/or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.

It recommended that when families/carers are making decisions about support for gender questioning children, they should be encouraged to seek clinical help and advice. When parents are supporting pre-pubertal children, clinical services should ensure that they can be seen as early as possible by a clinical professional with relevant experience. As such, when supporting a gender questioning child, schools should take a cautious approach and consider the broad range of their individual needs, in partnership with the child's parents (other than in the exceptionally rare circumstances where involving parents would constitute a significant risk of harm to the child), including any clinical advice that is available and how to address wider vulnerabilities such as the risk of bullying. Risks can be compounded where children lack trusted adults with whom they can be open. It is therefore vital that staff endeavour to reduce the additional barriers faced and create a culture where they can speak out or share their concerns with members of staff.

Children and the court system

Children are sometimes required to give evidence in criminal courts, either for crimes committed against them or for crimes they have witnessed. There are two age appropriate guides to support children [5-11-year olds](#) and [12-17 year olds](#).

The guides explain each step of the process, support and special measures that are available. There are diagrams illustrating the courtroom structure and the use of video links is explained.

Making child arrangements via the family courts following separation can be stressful and entrench conflict in families. This can be stressful for children. The Ministry of Justice has launched an online [child arrangements information tool](#) with clear and concise information on the dispute resolution service. This may be useful for some parents and carers.

Children missing from education

Children missing from education, particularly persistently, 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 settings response to children missing from education supports identifying such abuse and helps prevent the risk of them going missing in the future. This includes when problems are first emerging but also where children are already known to local authority children's social care and need 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 going missing from education may increase known safeguarding risks within the family or in the community.

Children who are absent from education

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 response to persistently absent pupils and children missing education supports identifying such abuse, and in the case of absent children, helps prevent the risk of them becoming a child missing education in the future. This includes when problems are first emerging but also where children are already known to local authority children's social care and need 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 regarding children missing education, including information schools **must** provide to the local authority when removing a child from the

school roll at standard and non-standard transition points, can be found in the department's statutory guidance: [Children Missing Education](#).

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

Elective home education (EHE)

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.

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, this would also apply to Pre School.

Where a parent/carer has expressed their intention to remove a child with a view to educating at home, we recommend that local authorities, schools, pre school, 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.

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.

Alternative Provision

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

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 ensure itself that appropriate safeguarding checks have been carried out on new staff.

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. This will apply when the Pre School has a child moving setting.

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

- [Alternative Provision DFE statutory guidance and](#)
- [Education for children with health needs who cannot attend school - GOV.UK](#)

www.gov.uk – DFE statutory guidance.

Children with family members in prison

Approximately 200,000 children in England and Wales have a parent sent to prison each year. These children are at risk of poor outcomes including poverty, stigma, isolation and poor mental health. The National Information Centre on Children of Offenders, [NICCO](#) provides information designed to support professionals working with offenders and their children, to help mitigate negative consequences for those children.

Domestic abuse

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 received Royal Assent on 29 April 2021. The Act introduces the first ever statutory definition of domestic abuse and recognises the impact of domestic abuse on children, as victims in their own right, if they see, hear or experience the effects of abuse. The statutory definition of domestic abuse, based on the previous cross-government definition, ensures that different types of relationships are captured, including ex-partners and family members. The definition captures a range of different abusive behaviours, including physical, emotional and economic abuse and coercive and controlling behaviour. Under the statutory definition, both the person who is carrying out the behaviour and the person to whom the behaviour is directed towards must be aged 16 or over and they must be “personally connected” (as defined in section 2 of the 2021 Act).

Types of domestic abuse include intimate partner violence, abuse by family members, teenage relationship abuse and child to parent abuse. Anyone can be a victim of domestic abuse, regardless of sexual identity, age, ethnicity, socio-economic status, sexuality or background and domestic abuse can take place inside or outside of the home. The government will issue statutory guidance to provide further information for those working with domestic abuse victims and perpetrators, including the impact on children.

All children can witness and be adversely affected by domestic abuse in the context of their home life where domestic abuse occurs between family members. Experiencing domestic abuse can have a serious, long lasting emotional and psychological impact on children. In some cases, a child may blame themselves for the abuse or may have had to leave the family home as a result.

Young people can also experience domestic abuse within their own intimate relationships. This form of child-on-child abuse is sometimes referred to as ‘teenage relationship abuse’. Depending on the age of the young people, this may not be recognised in law under the statutory definition of ‘domestic abuse’ (if one or both parties are under 16). However, as with any child under 18, where there are concerns about safety or welfare, child safeguarding procedures should be followed and both young victims and young perpetrators should be offered support.

Operation Encompass

[Operation Encompass](#) operates in all police forces across England. It helps police and schools work together to provide emotional and practical help to children. The system ensures that when the police are called to an incident of domestic abuse, where there are children in the household who have experienced the domestic incident, the police will inform the key adult (usually the designated safeguarding lead (or deputy)) in school before the child or children arrive at school the following day. This ensures that the school has up to date relevant information about the child’s circumstances and can enable immediate support to be put in place, according to the child’s needs. Operation Encompass does not replace statutory safeguarding procedures. Where appropriate, the police

and/or schools should make a referral to local authority children's social care if they are concerned about a child's welfare. More information about the scheme and how schools can become involved is available on the Operation Encompass website.

Operation Encompass provides an advice and helpline service for all staff members from educational settings who may be concerned about children who have experienced domestic abuse. The helpline is available 8AM to 1PM, Monday to Friday on 0204 513 9990 (charged at local rate).

National Domestic Abuse Helpline

Refuge runs the National Domestic Abuse Helpline, which can be called free of charge and in confidence, 24 hours a day on 0808 2000 247. Its website provides guidance and support for potential victims, as well as those who are worried about friends and loved ones. It also has a form through which a safe time from the team for a call can be booked.

Additional advice on identifying children who are affected by domestic abuse and how they can be helped is available at:

- [NSPCC- UK domestic-abuse Signs Symptoms Effects](#)
- [Refuge what is domestic violence/effects of domestic violence on children](#)
- [Safe Young Lives: Young people and domestic abuse | Safelives](#)
- [Domestic abuse: specialist sources of support](#) (includes information for adult victims, young people facing abuse in their own relationships and parents experiencing child to parent violence/abuse)
- [Home : Operation Encompass](#) (includes information for schools on the impact of domestic abuse on children)

Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)

Some specific forms of CCE can include children being forced or manipulated into transporting drugs or money through county lines, 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.

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. As children involved in criminal exploitation often commit crimes themselves, their vulnerability as victims is not always recognised by adults and professionals, (particularly older children), and they are not treated as victims despite the harm they have experienced. They may still have been criminally exploited even if the activity appears to be something they have agreed or consented to. 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.

CSE is a form of child sexual abuse. Sexual abuse may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or nonpenetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing, and 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 Some of the following can be indicators of CCE:

- children who appear with unexplained gifts or new possessions;
- children who associate with other young people involved in exploitation;

- children who suffer from changes in emotional well-being;
- children who misuse drugs and alcohol;
- children who go missing for periods of time or regularly come home late; and
- children who regularly miss school or education or do not take part in education.

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

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.

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. Some children may not realise they are being exploited for example they believe they are in a genuine romantic relationship.

The above CCE indicators can also be indicators of CSE, as can:

- children who have older boyfriends or girlfriends; and
- children who suffer from sexually transmitted infections or become pregnant. The department provide: [Child sexual exploitation: guide for practitioners](#)

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)

Both CSE and CCE are forms of abuse that occur where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance in power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child into taking part in sexual or criminal activity, in 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. CSE and CCE 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.

Sexual violence

It is important that staff are aware of sexual violence and the fact children can, and sometimes do, abuse other children in this way and that it **can happen both inside and outside of the setting**. When referring to sexual violence in this advice, we do so in the context of child-on-child sexual violence.

When referring to sexual violence we are referring to sexual offences under the Sexual Offences Act 2003 as described below:

Rape: A person (A) commits an offence of rape if: he intentionally penetrates the vagina, anus or mouth of another person (B) with his penis, B does not consent to the penetration and A does not reasonably believe that B consents.

Assault by Penetration: A person (A) commits an offence if: s/he intentionally penetrates the vagina or anus of another person (B) with a part of her/his body or anything else, the penetration is sexual, B does not consent to the penetration and A does not reasonably believe that B consents.

Sexual Assault: A person (A) commits an offence of sexual assault if: s/he intentionally touches another person (B), the touching is sexual, B does not consent to the touching and A does not reasonably believe that B consents. (NOTE- Settings should be aware that sexual assault covers a very wide range of behaviour so a single act of kissing someone without consent, or touching someone's bottom/breasts/genitalia without consent, can still constitute sexual assault.)

Causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent: A person (A) commits an offence if: s/he intentionally causes another person (B) to engage in an activity, the activity is sexual, B does not

consent to engaging in the activity, and A does not reasonably believe that B consents. (NOTE – this could include forcing someone to strip, touch themselves sexually, or to engage in sexual activity with a third party.)

What is consent? Consent is about having the freedom and capacity to choose. Consent to sexual activity may be given to one sort of sexual activity but not another, e.g. to vaginal but not anal sex or penetration with conditions, such as wearing a condom. Consent can be withdrawn at any time during sexual activity and each time activity occurs. Someone consents to vaginal, anal or oral penetration only if s/he agrees by choice to that penetration and has the freedom and capacity to make that choice.

- a child under the age of 13 can never consent to any sexual activity
- the age of consent is 16
- sexual intercourse without consent is rape.

Further information about consent can be found here: [Rape Crisis England & Wales - Sexual consent](#)

Sexual harassment

When referring to sexual harassment we mean ‘unwanted conduct of a sexual nature’ that can occur online and offline and both inside and outside of the setting. When we reference sexual harassment, we do so in the context of child-on-child sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is likely to: violate a child’s dignity, and/or make them feel intimidated, degraded or humiliated and/or create a hostile, offensive or sexualised environment.

Whilst not intended to be an exhaustive list, sexual harassment can include:

- sexual comments, such as: telling sexual stories, making lewd comments, making sexual remarks about clothes and appearance and calling someone sexualised names
- sexual “jokes” or taunting physical behaviour, such as: deliberately brushing against someone, interfering with someone’s clothes. Consider when any of this crosses a line into sexual violence – it is important to talk to and consider the experience of the victim.
- displaying pictures, photos or drawings of a sexual nature
- upskirting (this is a criminal offence), and online sexual harassment. This may be standalone, or part of a wider pattern of sexual harassment and/or sexual violence. It may include:

- consensual and non-consensual sharing of nude and semi-nude images and/or videos. Taking and sharing nude photographs of U18s is a criminal offence. [UKCIS Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people](#) provides detailed advice.

- sharing of unwanted explicit content

- sexualised online bullying

- unwanted sexual comments and messages, including, on social media

- sexual exploitation; coercion and threats, and

- coercing others into sharing images of themselves or performing acts they’re not comfortable with online.

Sexual harassment (as set out above) creates a culture that, if not challenged, can normalise inappropriate behaviours and provide an environment that may lead to sexual violence.

Harmful sexual behaviour

Children's sexual behaviour exists on a wide continuum, ranging from normal and developmentally expected to inappropriate, problematic, abusive and violent. Problematic, abusive and violent sexual behaviour is developmentally inappropriate and may cause developmental damage. A useful umbrella term is "harmful sexual behaviour" (HSB). The term has been widely adopted in child protection and is used in this advice. **HSB can occur online and/or face-to-face and can also occur simultaneously between the two.** HSB should be considered in a child protection context.

When considering HSB, both ages and the stages of development of the children are critical factors. Sexual behaviour between children can be considered harmful if one of the children is much older, particularly if there is more than two years' difference or if one of the children is pre-pubescent and the other is not. However, a younger child can abuse an older child, particularly if they have power over them, for example, if the older child is disabled or smaller in stature. Confidential specialist support and advice on HSB is available from the specialist sexual violence sector and sources B.

It is effective safeguarding practice for the designated safeguarding lead (and their deputies) to have a good understanding of HSB. This could form part of their safeguarding training. This will aid in planning preventative education, implementing preventative measures, drafting and implementing an effective child protection policy and incorporating the approach to sexual violence and sexual harassment into the whole setting approach to safeguarding.

HSB **can**, in some cases, progress on a continuum. Addressing inappropriate behaviour **can** be an important intervention that helps prevent problematic, abusive and/or violent behaviour in the future. Children displaying HSB have often experienced their own abuse and trauma. It is important that they are offered appropriate support.

Local authority children's social care and **the police** will be important partners where a crime might have been committed. Referrals to the police will often be a natural progression of making a referral to local authority children's social care. The designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) should lead the response and should be aware of the local process for referrals to children's social care and making referrals to the police.

County lines

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". This activity can happen locally as well as across the UK - no specified distance of travel is required. Children and vulnerable adults are exploited to move, store and sell drugs and money. Offenders will often use coercion, intimidation, violence (including sexual violence) and weapons to ensure compliance of victims.

Children can be targeted and recruited into county lines in a number of locations including any type of schools (including special schools), further and higher educational institutions, pupil referral units, children's homes and care homes.

Children are also increasingly being targeted and recruited online using social media. Children can easily become trapped by this type of exploitation as county lines gangs can manufacture drug debts which need to be worked off or threaten serious violence and kidnap towards victims (and their families) if they attempt to leave the county lines network.

A number of the indicators for CSE and CCE as detailed above may be applicable to where children are involved in county lines. Some additional specific indicators that may be present where a child is criminally exploited through involvement in county lines are children who:

- go missing and are subsequently found in areas away from their home

- have been the victim or perpetrator of serious violence (e.g. knife crime)
- are involved in receiving requests for drugs via a phone line, moving drugs, handing over and collecting money for drugs
- are exposed to techniques such as 'plugging', where drugs are concealed internally to avoid detection
- are found in accommodation that they have no connection with, often called a 'trap house or cuckooing' or hotel room where there is drug activity
- owe a 'debt bond' to their exploiters
- have their bank accounts used to facilitate drug dealing.

Further information on the signs of a child's involvement in county lines is available in guidance published by the [Home Office and The Children's Society County Lines Toolkit For Professionals](#)

Homelessness

Being homeless or being at risk of becoming homeless presents a real risk to a child's welfare. The designated safeguarding lead (and any deputies) should be aware of contact details and referral routes into the Local Housing Authority so they can raise/progress concerns at the earliest opportunity. Indicators that a family may be at risk of homelessness include household debt, rent arrears, domestic abuse and anti-social behaviour, as well as the family being asked to leave a property. Whilst referrals and/or discussion with the Local Housing Authority should be progressed as appropriate, and in accordance with local procedures, this does not, and should not, replace a referral into local authority children's social care where a child has been harmed or is at risk of harm.

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 places a new legal duty on English councils so that everyone who is homeless or at risk of homelessness will have access to meaningful help including an assessment of their needs and circumstances, the development of a personalised housing plan, and work to help them retain their accommodation or find a new place to live. The following factsheets usefully summarise the new duties: [Homeless Reduction Act Factsheets](#). The new duties shift the focus to early intervention and encourages those at risk to seek support as soon as possible, before they are facing a homelessness crisis.

In most cases staff will be considering homelessness in the context of children who live with their families, and intervention will be on that basis. However, it should also be recognised in some cases 16 and 17 year olds could be living independently from their parents or guardians, for example through their exclusion from the family home, and will require a different level of intervention and support. Local authority children's social care will be the lead agency for these children and the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) should ensure appropriate referrals are made based on the child's circumstances. The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities have published joint statutory guidance on the provision of accommodation for 16 and 17 year olds who may be homeless and/or require accommodation:

Mental Health

All staff should be aware that mental health problems can, in some cases, be an indicator that a child has suffered or is at risk of suffering abuse, neglect or exploitation. The setting has an important role to play in supporting mental health and well being of the child

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. The setting can access a range of advice to help them identify children in need of extra mental health support, this includes working with external agencies.

If staff have a mental health concern about a child that is also a safeguarding concern, immediate action should be taken, following their child protection policy, and speaking to the designated safeguarding lead or a deputy.

Child abduction and community safety incidents

Child abduction is the unauthorised removal or retention of a minor from a parent or anyone with legal responsibility for the child. Child abduction can be committed by parents or other family members; by people known but not related to the victim (such as neighbours, friends and acquaintances); and by strangers.

Other community safety incidents in the vicinity can raise concerns amongst children and parents, for example, people loitering nearby or unknown adults engaging children in conversation.

As children get older and are granted more independence (for example, as they start walking to school on their own) it is important they are given practical advice on how to keep themselves safe. Many schools provide outdoor-safety lessons run by teachers or by local police staff. Staff will not allow older siblings under the age of 16 to pick anyone up from Little Stars.

It is important that lessons focus on building children's confidence and abilities rather than simply warning them about all strangers, staff can share this with parents who require advice. Further information is available at: www.actionagainstabduction.org and www.clevernevergoes.org.

Serious violence

All staff should be aware of the indicators, which may signal children are at risk from, or are involved with, serious violent crime. These may include increased absence from setting, a change in friendships or relationships with older individuals or groups, a significant decline in performance, signs of self-harm or a significant change in wellbeing, or signs of assault or unexplained injuries. Unexplained gifts or new possessions could also indicate that children have been approached by, or are involved with, individuals associated with criminal networks or gangs and may be at risk of criminal exploitation.

Modern Slavery and the National Referral Mechanism

Modern slavery encompasses human trafficking and slavery, servitude and forced or compulsory labour. Exploitation can take many forms, including: sexual exploitation, forced labour, slavery, servitude, forced criminality and the removal of organs.

Further information on the signs that someone may be a victim of modern slavery, the support available to victims and how to refer them to the NRM is available in Statutory Guidance. [Modern slavery: how to identify and support victims - GOV.UK](#)

The Prevent duty

All educational settings are subject to a duty under section 26 of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 (the CTSA 2015), in the exercise of their functions, to have “due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism”. This duty is known as the Prevent duty.

The Prevent duty should be seen as part of the wider safeguarding obligations. Designated safeguarding leads (and deputies) and other senior leaders should familiarise themselves with the revised [Prevent duty guidance: for England and Wales](#), which are specifically concerned with schools (and also covers childcare). Designated safeguarding leads (and deputies) and other senior leaders in colleges should familiarise themselves with the [Prevent duty guidance: for further education institutions in England and Wales](#). The guidance is set out in terms of four general themes: risk assessment, working in partnership, staff training, and IT policies.

The designated safeguarding lead (and any deputies) should be aware of local procedures for making a Prevent referral.

Channel

Channel is a voluntary, confidential support programme which focuses on providing support at an early stage to people who are identified as being vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism. Prevent referrals may be passed to a multi-agency Channel panel, which will discuss the individual referred to determine whether they are vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism and consider the appropriate support required. A representative from the school or college may be asked to attend the Channel panel to help with this assessment. An individual’s engagement with the programme is entirely voluntary at all stages.

The designated safeguarding lead (or deputy) should consider if it would be appropriate to share any information with the new school or college in advance of a child leaving. For example, information that would allow the new school or college to continue supporting victims of abuse or those who are currently receiving support through the ‘Channel’ programme, and have that support in place for when the child arrives.

Statutory guidance on Channel is available at: [Channel guidance](#).

So-called ‘honour-based’ abuse (including Female Genital Mutilation and Forced Marriage)

So-called ‘honour-based’ abuse (HBA) encompasses incidents or crimes which have been committed to protect or defend the honour of the family and/or the community, including female genital mutilation (FGM), forced marriage, and practices such as breast ironing. Abuse committed in the context of preserving “honour” often involves a wider network of family or community pressure and can include multiple perpetrators. It is important to be aware of this dynamic and additional risk factors when deciding what form of safeguarding action to take. All forms of HBA are abuse (regardless of the motivation) and should be handled and escalated as such. Professionals in all agencies, and individuals and groups in relevant communities, need to be alert to the possibility of a child being at risk of HBA, or already having suffered HBA.

Actions

If staff have a concern regarding a child that might be at risk of HBA or who has suffered from HBA, they should speak to the designated safeguarding lead (or deputy). As appropriate, they will activate local safeguarding procedures, using existing national and local protocols for multi-agency liaison with police and children’s social care. Where FGM has taken place, since 31 October 2015 there has been a mandatory reporting duty placed on **teachers** that requires a different approach (see following section).

FGM

FGM comprises all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs. It is illegal in the UK and a form of child abuse with long-lasting harmful consequences.

FGM mandatory reporting duty for teachers

Section 5B of the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 (as inserted by section 74 of the Serious Crime Act 2015) places a statutory duty upon **teachers** along with regulated health and social care professionals in England and Wales, to report to the police where they discover (either through disclosure by the victim or visual evidence) that FGM appears to have been carried out on a girl under 18. Those failing to report such cases may face disciplinary sanctions. It will be rare for teachers to see visual evidence, and they should **not** be examining pupils or students, but the same definition of what is meant by “to discover that an act of FGM appears to have been carried out” is used for all professionals to whom this mandatory reporting duty applies. Information on when and how to make a report can be found at: [Mandatory reporting of female genital mutilation procedural information](#)

Staff **must** personally report to the police cases where they discover that an act of FGM appears to have been carried out. Unless the staff has good reason not to, they should still consider and discuss any such case with the Pre School designated safeguarding lead (or deputy) and involve children’s social care as appropriate. The duty does not apply in relation to at risk or suspected cases (i.e. where the teacher does not discover that an act of FGM appears to have been carried out, either through disclosure by the victim or visual evidence) or in cases where the woman is 18 or over. In these cases, teachers should follow local safeguarding procedures. The following is a useful summary of the FGM mandatory reporting duty: [FGM Fact Sheet](#).

Forced marriage

Forcing a person into a marriage is a crime in England and Wales. A forced marriage is one entered into without the full and free consent of one or both parties and where violence, threats or any other form of coercion is used to cause a person to enter into a marriage. Threats can be physical or emotional and psychological. A lack of full and free consent can be where a person does not consent or where they cannot consent (if they have learning disabilities, for example). Nevertheless, some perpetrators use perceived cultural practices as a way to coerce a person into marriage. Educational settings can play an important role in safeguarding children from forced marriage. The Forced Marriage Unit has published [statutory guidance](#) and [Multi-agency guidelines](#), pages 35-36 of which focus on the role of schools and colleges. Educational settings can contact the Forced Marriage Unit if they need advice or information: Contact: 020 7008 0151 or email fmufco.gov.uk.

Preventing radicalisation

Children are vulnerable to extremist ideology and radicalisation. Similar to protecting children from other forms of harms and abuse, protecting children from this risk should be a part of a Pre Schools safeguarding approach.

- **Extremism** is the vocal or active opposition to our fundamental values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and the mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. This also includes calling for the death of members of the armed forces.
- **Radicalisation** refers to the process by which a person comes to support terrorism and extremist ideologies associated with terrorist groups.
- **Terrorism** is an action that endangers or causes serious violence to a person/people; causes serious damage to property; or seriously interferes or disrupts an electronic system. The use or threat **must** be designed to influence the government or to intimidate the public and is made for the purpose of advancing a political, religious or ideological cause.

There is no single way of identifying whether a child is likely to be susceptible to an extremist ideology. Background factors combined with specific influences such as family and friends may contribute to a child's vulnerability. Similarly, radicalisation can occur through many different methods (such as social media or the internet) and settings (such as within the home).

However, it is possible to protect vulnerable people from extremist ideology and intervene to prevent those at risk of radicalisation being radicalised. As with other safeguarding risks, staff should be alert to changes in children's behaviour, which could indicate that they may be in need of help or protection. Staff should use their judgement in identifying children who might be at risk of radicalisation and act proportionately which may include the designated safeguarding lead (or deputy) making a Prevent referral.

The designated safeguarding lead team should be aware of local procedures for making a Prevent referral.

Online safety

It is essential that children are safeguarded from potentially harmful and inappropriate online material. An effective online safety empowers to protect and educate children, and staff in their use of technology and establishes mechanisms to identify, intervene in, and escalate any concerns where appropriate.

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, anti-Semitism, radicalisation, extremism, **misinformation, disinformation, including fake news and conspiracy theories.**

contact: being subjected to harmful online interaction with other users; 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 (e.g. consensual and non-consensual sharing of nudes and semi-nudes and/or pornography, sharing other explicit images and online bullying.

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/>).

Little Stars proprietors should ensure online safety is a running and interrelated theme whilst devising and implementing their whole 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 training, the role and responsibilities of the designated safeguarding lead (and deputies) and any parental engagement.

Online safety approach should be reflected in the child protection policy which, amongst other things, should include appropriate filtering and monitoring on devices and networks. Considering the 4Cs (above) will provide the basis of an effective online policy. The setting has a clear policy on the use of mobile and smart technology. The setting does not allow mobile phones or smart technology within the nursery by professionals, parent/carers and staff.

Filtering and monitoring

Whilst considering their responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and provide them with a safe environment in which to learn, proprietors should be doing all that they reasonably can to limit children's exposure to the above risks from the settings IT system. As part of this process, Little Stars will ensure the setting has appropriate filtering and monitoring systems in place and regularly review their effectiveness. 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. The number of and age range of their children will be considered, 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.

The appropriateness of any filtering and monitoring systems, by the risk assessment required by the Prevent Duty.

To support this duty, the Department for Education has published [filtering and monitoring standards](#) which sets:

- 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.
- have effective monitoring strategies in place that meet their safeguarding needs
- 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.

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

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

- UK Safer Internet Centre: <https://saferinternet.org.uk/guide-and-resource/teachers-and-school-staff/appropriate-filtering-and-monitoring>. 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 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 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](#).
- The Department has published [Generative AI: product safety expectations](#) to support 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

Education settings are directly responsible for ensuring they have the appropriate level of security protection procedures in place in order to safeguard their systems, staff and learners and review the effectiveness of these procedures periodically to keep up with evolving cyber-crime technologies. Guidance on e-security is available from the [National Education Network](#). In addition, schools and colleges should consider meeting the [Cyber security standards for schools and colleges](#).GOV.UK.

Broader guidance on cyber security including considerations can be found at [Cyber security training for school staff - NCSC.GOV.UK](#).

Reviewing online safety

Technology, and risks and harms related to it, evolve, and change rapidly. It should be considered to carry 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](#).

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 and newly qualified staff induct mentees and provide ongoing support, development and monitoring.

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

Information and support

There is a wealth of additional information available to support settings and parents to keep children safe online. A sample is provided in Annex B of Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025.

Use of school premises for out of hours activities

Where the proprietors of The Mill Primary School are renting out school facilities/premises (for example 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.

When activities are provided by Little Stars Pre School After School Club, is under the direct supervision or management of their staff, their arrangements for child protection will apply. The school should therefore seek assurance that the provider Little Stars - 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 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. Little Stars 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-school settings](#) details the safeguarding arrangements that schools and colleges should expect these providers to have in place.

Where the proprietors of The Mill Primary School are renting out school facilities/premises (for example community groups, sports associations, and service providers to run community or extra-curricular activities), the Mill Primary School will not allow access to the Pre School facilities, to ensure appropriate arrangements by the Pre School are in place to keep children safe.

Little Stars will appoint a designated safeguarding lead, who will liaise directly with the school's designated safeguarding lead. Adhering to Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025.

Child protection file

Where children leave the Pre School (including for transfers / moving) the designated safeguarding lead should ensure their child protection file is transferred to the new setting as soon as possible within 5 days of starting the new setting. This should be transferred separately from the main child's file, ensuring secure transit, and confirmation of receipt should be obtained. Receiving information staff should ensure key staff such as designated safeguarding leads and SENCOs or the named person with oversight for SEN in colleges, are aware as required. 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 setting in advance of a child leaving. For example, information that would allow the new provision, to continue supporting victims of abuse and have that support in place for when the child arrives

Whistleblowing

Little Stars Pre School has a whistleblowing policy. This enables any member of staff to make complaints about conduct within the Pre School to a person outside the Pre School on a confidential basis and without fear that their confidentiality will be breached. Where the circumstances are such that a member of staff believes that a complaint can only safely be made to person outside the Pre School then reference should be made in line with the procedures laid out in the Whistleblowing Policy. 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 may be open to them:

-General guidance on whistleblowing can be found via: <https://www.gov.uk/whistleblowing>

-The NSPCC's [What You Can Do To Report Abuse](#) – dedicated helpline is available as an alternative route for staff who do not feel able to raise concerns regarding child protections failures internally or have concerns about the way a concern is being handled. Staff can call 0800 028 0285 and email help@nspcc.org.uk

Appendix 1 – Physical Abuse

Indicators on child:

Bruising

It is often possible to differentiate between accidental and inflicted bruises. The following must be considered as non-accidental unless there is evidence or adequate explanation provided:

- Bruising in or around mouth
- Two simultaneous bruised eyes, without bruising to the forehead (rarely accidental though a single bruised eye can be accidental or bruised)
- Repeated or multiple bruising on the head or on sites unlikely to be injured accidentally, for example the back, mouth, cheek, ear, stomach, chest, under arms, neck, genital and rectal areas
- Variation in colour, possibly indicating injuries caused at different times
- The outline of an object used, e.g. belt mark, hand prints, hair brush
- Linear bruising at any sites particularly the buttocks, back or face
- Bruising or tears around the ear lobes indicating injury by pulling ears
- Grasp marks to the upper arms, fore arms or legs
- Petechial hemorrhage's (pinpoint blood spots under the skin) commonly associated with slapping, smothering/suffocating, strangling and squeezing.

Fractures

Fractures may cause pain, swelling and discoloration over a bone or joint. It is unlikely that a child will have had a fracture without the carers being aware of the child's distress.

If the child is not using a limb, has pain on movement and or swelling of the limb there may be a fracture.

There are grounds for concerns if:

- The history provided is vague, non existent or inconsistent
- There are associated old fractures
- Medical attention is sought after a period of delay when the fracture has caused symptoms such as swelling, pain or loss of movement.
- Rib fractures are only caused in major trauma such as road traffic accident, a severe shaking injury or a direct injury such as a kick.

Skull fractures are uncommon in ordinary falls i.e. from three feet or less. The injury is usually witnessed, the child will cry and if there is a fracture, there is likely to be swelling on the skull developing over 2-3 hours. All skull fractures should be taken seriously.

Mouth injuries

Tears to the frenulum (tissue attaching the upper lip to gum) often indicates force-feeding of a baby or a child with a disability. There is often finger bruising to the cheeks and around the mouth. Rarely there may also be grazing to the palate.

Poisoning

Ingestion of tablets or domestic poisoning in children under 5 is usually due to the carelessness of a parent/carer, but may be self harming even in young children.

Fabricated or Induced Illness

Professionals may be concerned at the possibility of a child suffering significant harm as a result of having illness fabricated or induced by the parent/carer. Possible concerns are:

- Discrepancies between reported and observed medical conditions such as incidence of fits
- Attendance at various hospitals in different geographical areas
- Development of feeding/eating disorders as a result of unpleasant feeding interactions
- The child developing abnormal attitudes to their own health
- Non organic failure to thrive – a child does not put on weight or grow and there is no underlying medical cause
- Speech, language or motor development delays
- Dislike of close physical contact
- Attachment disorders
- Low self esteem
- Poor quality or no relationships with peers because social interactions are restricted
- Poor attendance at setting and under achieving

Bite Marks

Bite marks can leave clear impressions of the teeth when seen shortly after the injury has been inflicted. The shape then becomes a more defused ring bruise or oval or crescent shape. Those over 3cm in diameter are more likely to have been caused by an adult or older child.

A medical opinion preferably within the last 24 hours should be sought where there is any doubt over the origin of the bite.

Burns and Scalds

It can be difficult to distinguish between accidental and non-accidental burns and scalds. Scalds are the most common intentional burn injury recorded. Any burn with a clear outline may be suspicious e.g. circular burns from cigarettes, linear burns from hot metal rods or electrical fire elements, burns or uniform depth over a large area, scalds have a line indicating immersion or poured liquid.

Old scars indicating previous burns/scalds, which did not have, appropriate treatment or adequate explanation. Scalds to the buttocks of a child, particularly in the absence of burns to the feet are indicative of dipping into a hot liquid bath.

The following points are also worth remembering:

- A responsible adult checks the temperature of the bath before the child gets in
- A child is unlikely to sit down voluntarily in a hot bath and cannot accidentally scald its bottom without scalding his or her feet
- A child getting into too hot water of their own accord will struggle to get out and there will be splash marks

Scars

A large number of scars or scars of different sizes or ages, or on different parts of the body, or unusually shaped, may suggest abuse.

Emotional / Behavioural Problems

Refusal to discuss injury

Admission of punishment, which appears excessive

Fear of parents being contacted and fear of returning home

Withdrawal from physical contact

Arms and legs kept covered during hot weather

Fear of medical help

Aggression towards others

Frequently absent

An explanation, which is inconsistent with an injury

Several different explanations provided for an injury

Indicators in the parent

- May have injuries themselves that suggests domestic violence
- Not seeking medical help or unexplained delay in seeking medical help
- Reluctant to give information or mention previous injuries
- Disinterest or undisturbed by accident or injury
- Aggressive towards child or others
- Unauthorized attempts to administer medication
- Tries to draw the children into their own illness
- Past history of child hood abuse, self harm, false allegations of physical or sexual abuse
- Parent/Carer may be over involved in participating in medical tests, taking temperature and measuring bodily fluids
- Observed to be intensely involved with their children, never taking a much-needed break nor allowing anyone else to under take their child's care
- May appear unusually concerned about the results of investigations which may indicate physical illness in the child
- Wider parenting difficulties may or may not be associated with this form of abuse
- Parent/Carer has convictions for violent crimes

Indicators in the family environment

- Marginalized or isolated by the community
- History of mental health, alcohol or drug misuse or domestic violence

- History of unexplained death, illness or multiple surgeries in parents/carers and or siblings of the family
- Past history of child hood abuse, self-harm, or false allegations or physical or sexual assault or a culture of physical chastisement

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person.

It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or making fun of what they say or how they communicate.

It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond a child's developmental capability as well as over protecting and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the participating in normal social interaction, it may involve seeing or hearing the ill treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyber bullying) 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.

Indicators of the child:

- Development delay
- Abnormal attachment between a child and parent/carer e.g. anxious, indiscriminate or no attachment
- Aggressive behavior towards others
- Child scapegoated within family
- Frozen watchfulness, particularly in Pre School children
- Low self esteem and lack of confidence
- Withdrawn or seen as loner – difficulty relating to others
- Over reaction to mistakes
- Fear of new situations
- Inappropriate emotional responses to painful situations
- Neurotic behaviour
- Self harm
- Fear of parents being contacted
- Extremes of passivity or aggression
- Drug/solvent abuse
- Chronic running away
- Low self esteem
- Air of detachment – don't care attitude
- Social isolation
- Depression/withdrawal
- Behavioural problems e.g. aggression, attention seeking, hyper activity, poor attention
- Low self esteem, lack of confidence, fearful, distressed, anxious
- Poor peer relationships

Indicators in parents

Domestic abuse, adult mental health problems and parental substance misuse may be features in families where children are exposed to abuse.

Abnormal attachment to child e.g. over anxious or disinterested

Imposes inappropriate expectations on the child e.g. prevents the child's developmental exploration or learning, or normal social interaction through over protection

Wider parenting difficulties may or may not be associated with this form of abuse

Indicators of in the family environment

- Lack of support from family or social network
- Marginalized or isolated from the community
- History of mental health, alcohol or drug misuse or domestic violence

- History of unexplained death, illness or multiple surgeries in parents/carers and or siblings of the family
- Past history of child hood abuse, self-harm, or false allegations or physical or sexual assault or a culture of physical chastisement

Neglect

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse.

Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent/career failing to:

- Provide adequate food, clothing and shelter
 - Protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger
 - Ensure adequate supervision
 - Ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment
- It may also include neglect of or unresponsiveness to a child's basic emotional needs

Indicators in a child

- Physical presentation
- Failure to thrive
- Under weight
- Frequent hunger
- Dirty unkempt condition
- Inadequately clothed, clothing in poor state of repair
- Red/Purple mottled skin, particularly on the hands and feet, seen in winter due to cold
- Swollen limbs with sores that are slow to heal
- Abnormal voracious appetite
- Dry, sparse hair
- Recurrent untreated skin conditions e.g. nappy rash, eczema, head lice or scabies
- Unmanaged, untreated health, medical conditions including poor dental health
- Frequent accidents or injuries

Development

- General delay
- Inadequate social skills and poor socialization

Emotional/behavioural presentation

- Attachment disorders
- Absence of normal social responsiveness
- Indiscriminate behaviour in relationships with adults
- Emotionally needy
- Compulsive stealing
- Constant tiredness
- Frequently absent or late
- Poor self esteem
- Destructive tendencies
- Thrives away from home environment
- Aggressive and impulsive behaviour
- Disturbed peer relationships
- Self-harming behaviour

Indicators in parent

- Dirty, unkempt presentation
- Inadequately clothed
- Inadequate social skills and poor socialization
- Abnormal attachment to the child e.g. anxious
- Low self esteem and lack of confidence
- Failure to meet basic essential needs e.g. food, clothing, warmth and hygiene

- Failure to meet the child's health and medical needs e.g. poor dental health, failure to attend or keep appointments with health visitor GP or hospital visits, GP registration,
- Child left with adults who are intoxicated or violent
- Child abandoned or left alone for excessive periods
- Wider parenting difficulties may or may not be associated with this form of abuse

Indicators in family environment

- History of neglect in the family
- Marginalized or isolated from the community
- History of mental health, alcohol or drug misuse or domestic violence
- History of unexplained death, illness or multiple surgeries in parents/carers and or siblings of the family
- Past history of child hood abuse, self-harm, or false allegations or physical or sexual assault or a culture of physical chastisement
- Dangerous or hazardous home environment including failure to use home safety equipment, risk from animals
- Poor state of home environment
- Lack of opportunities for child to play and learn

Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse Involves forcing or enticing 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, including assault by penetration (rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing or touching outside the clothing. They may include non contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in production of sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (via internet) by establishing a close relationship or friendship. Sexual abuse is solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit sexual abuse, as can children.

Indicators in the child

Physical Presentation

- Urinary infections, bleeding or soreness in genital or anal areas
- Recurrent pain or passing urine or faeces
- Blood on under clothes
- Sexually transmitted infections
- Vaginal soreness or bleeding
- Physical symptoms such as injuries to the genital or anal areas, bruising to buttocks abdomen or thighs

Emotional/Behavioural presentation

- Makes a disclosure
- Demonstrates sexual knowledge or behaviour inappropriate to age/development or that is unusually explicit
- Inexplicable changes in behaviour, such as aggressive or withdrawn
- Self harm
- Poor attention/concentration
- Withdrawn, isolated or excessive worrying
- Inappropriate sexualized conduct
- Wetting bed or regressive behaviour
- Draws sexually explicit pictures
- Depression

Indicators in parents

- Comments made about child
- Lack of sexual boundaries
- Wider parenting difficulties or vulnerabilities
- Grooming behaviour

-Parent is a sex offender

Indicator in the family environment

- Marginalized or isolated from the community
- History of mental health, alcohol or drug misuse or domestic violence
- History of unexplained death, illness or multiple surgeries in parents/carers and or siblings of the family
- Past history of child hood abuse, self-harm, or false allegations or physical or sexual assault or a culture of physical chastisement
- Family member is a sex offender

Appendix 2 – Specific Safeguarding Issues

Domestic Abuse

The Home Office defines domestic abuse as 'Any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional) between adults who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality.'

Children and unborn babies can be affected in a number of ways:

- An increased risk of physical injury during an incident either by accident or by trying to intervene
- Experience distress by witnessing the physical and emotional suffering of an adult
- It leads to anxiety and distress and children being sad / fearful
- It impacts on parenting capacity
- Affects their ability to form healthy relationships

Where a member of staff is concerned that this may apply to a child they should bring it to the attention of a DSL.

Substance Misuse / Mental Health Issues

It is a complex issue when children may be living in a household where there is substance misuse or mental health issues. This is often associated with child neglect and emotional abuse and may lead to basic care needs not being met. There are some instances where there are no obvious signs. Where a member of staff is concerned that this may apply to a child they should bring it to the attention of a DSL.

Gangs and Youth Violence

Children who become involved in gangs are at risk of violent crime, access to weapons, violence against other gangs, knife crime, sexual violence and substance misuse.

Staff should work together to

- Clarify the risk locally, posed by local gangs
- Identify children at risk
- Share information with other agencies

The following list of indicators is not exhaustive or definitive but it does highlight common signs which can assist professionals in identifying children or young people who may be victims of sexual exploitation.

Signs include:

- underage sexual activity
- inappropriate sexual or sexualised behaviour
- sexually risky behaviour, exchanging sex for gifts, articles, etc
- repeat sexually transmitted infections
- in girls, repeat pregnancy, abortions, miscarriage
- receiving unexplained gifts or gifts from unknown sources
- having multiple mobile phones and worrying about losing contact via mobile
- having unaffordable new things (clothes, mobile) or expensive habits (alcohol, drugs)

- changes in the way they dress
- going to hotels or other unusual locations to meet friends
- seen at known places of concern
- moving around the country, appearing in new towns or cities, not knowing where they are
- getting in/out of different cars driven by unknown adults
- having older boyfriends or girlfriends
- contact with known perpetrators
- involved in abusive relationships, intimidated and fearful of certain people or situations
- hanging out with groups of older people, or anti-social groups, or with other vulnerable peers
- associating with other young people involved in sexual exploitation
- recruiting other young people to exploitative situations
- truancy, exclusion, disengagement with school, opting out of education altogether
- unexplained changes in behaviour or personality (chaotic, aggressive, sexual)
- mood swings, volatile behaviour, emotional distress
- self-harming, suicidal thoughts, suicide attempts, overdosing, eating disorders
- drug or alcohol misuse
- getting involved in crime, police involvement, police records
- involved in gangs, gang fights, gang membership
- injuries from physical assault, physical restraint, sexual assault.

Child trafficking / Missing Children

There are two components for children which are 'Movement' (including within the UK) and 'for the purpose of exploitation'.

Our procedures for contacting parents, when a child is absent from school, will identify any children who are potentially 'missing' and the relevant authority will be notified if we feel we have a 'Child Missing from Education'

Knowing where children are during school hours is an extremely important aspect of Safeguarding. Missing school can be an indicator of abuse and neglect and may also raise concerns about other safeguarding issues, including the criminal exploitation of children.

We monitor attendance carefully and address poor or irregular attendance without delay.

We will always follow up with parents/carers when pupils are not at school. This means we need to have a least two up to date contacts numbers for parents/carers. Parents should remember to update the school as soon as possible if the numbers change.

In response to the guidance in Keeping Children Safe in Education (2025) the school has:

1. Staff who understand what to do when children do not attend regularly
2. Appropriate policies, procedures and responses for children who go missing from education (especially on repeat occasions).
3. Staff who know the signs and triggers for travelling to conflict zones, FGM and forced marriage.
4. Procedures to inform the local authority when we plan to take children off-roll when they:
 - leave school to be home educated
 - move away from the Pre School's location
 - remain medically unfit beyond compulsory school age
 - are in custody for four months or more (and will not return to Pre School afterwards); or
 - are permanently excluded

We will ensure that children who are expected to attend the Pre School but fail to take up the place will be referred to the local authority.

When a child leaves the Pre School, we will record the name of the child's new Pre School and their expected start date.

Bullying (Cyber-bullying)

Refer to the Anti-Bullying Policy for more detail.

If bullying does occur, all pupils should be able to tell and know that incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively. We promote TELLING Pre Schools. This means that anyone who knows that bullying is happening is expected to tell the staff – whether they are directly involved or not.

Bullying can be:

- Physical - pushing, kicking, hitting, punching or any use of violence
- Racist - racial taunts, graffiti, gestures
- Sexual - unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive comments, sexting
- Emotional - being unfriendly, excluding, tormenting (e.g. hiding books, threatening gestures)
- Homophobic - because of, or focussing on the issue of sexuality
- Verbal - name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing
- Cyber - All areas of internet, such as email and internet chat room misuse, mobile threats by text messaging and calls. Misuse of associated technology, i.e. camera and video facilities

Staff are vigilant to issues which may escalate and use strategies to prevent this from happening.

Faith Abuse / Honour Based Violence

This term describes cultural justifications for violence and abuse. It can be used to justify violence and abuse against women, some men and children. Honour based violence is normally associated with cultures and communities from Asia, the Middle East and Africa as well as Gypsy and Traveller communities.

If the individual concerned is under 18 existing Child Protection procedures should be instigated, using the appropriate procedures. This means making contact and / or a referral to Social Services.

This encompasses crimes which have been committed to protect or defend the honour of the family and/or community. This can include FGM, forced marriage and Breast ironing. All such concerns should be reported via the Pre School's safeguarding procedures. Where FGM has taken place, there is a mandatory duty on teachers to personally report this to the police and they should liaise with DSLs in school in order to follow the correct procedures. **All honour-based violence are forms of abuse.**

Forced Marriage

You have the right to choose who you marry, when you marry or if you marry at all.

Forced marriage is when you face physical pressure to marry (for example, threats, physical violence or sexual violence) or emotional and psychological pressure (eg if you're made to feel like you're bringing shame on your family).

This website gives further information: <https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/bullying-abuse-safety/crime-law/forced-marriage/>

Some families force their children to marry because they:

- think it's an important part of religion or culture
- are worried about the family's reputation and honour (in some cultures also known as 'izzat')
- want all of the family's money to stay together

- want to marry their children off in exchange for money
- don't approve of their child being gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender
- don't want their children to have relationships or sex
- feel pressured by the community or other family members to follow traditions
- want to keep family values and honour.

Force marriage offences

Forced marriage is illegal in England and Wales. This includes:

- taking someone overseas to force them to marry (whether or not the forced marriage takes place)
- marrying someone who lacks the mental capacity to consent to the marriage (whether they're pressured to or not)

For further details on Forced Marriage please see link - . <https://www.gov.uk/stop-forced-marriage>

Private Fostering

A private fostering arrangement is one that is made privately (without the involvement of a local authority) for the care of a child under the age of 16 years (under 18, if disabled) by someone other than a parent or close relative, in their own home, with the intention that it should last for 28 days or more.

A close family relative is defined as a 'grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt' and includes half-siblings and step-parents; it does not include great-aunts or uncles, great grandparents or cousins.

Parents and private foster carers both have a legal duty to inform the relevant local authority at least six weeks before the arrangement is due to start; not to do so is a criminal offence.

Whilst most privately fostered children are appropriately supported and looked after, they are a potentially vulnerable group who should be monitored by the local authority, particularly when the child has come from another country. In some cases privately fostered children are affected by abuse and neglect, or are involved in trafficking, child sexual exploitation or modern-day slavery.

Pre Schools have a mandatory duty to report to the local authority where they are aware or suspect that a child is subject to a private fostering arrangement. Although Pre Schools have a duty to inform the local authority, there is no duty for anyone, including the private foster carer or social workers to inform the Pre School. However, it should be clear to the school who has parental responsibility.

Pre School staff should notify the designated safeguarding lead when they become aware of private fostering arrangements. The designated safeguarding lead will speak to the family of the child involved to check that they are aware of their duty to inform the LA. The school itself has a duty to inform the local authority of the private fostering arrangements.

On admission to the Pre School, the Pre School will take steps to verify the relationship of the adults to the child who is being registered.

Further information on Child Sexual Exploitation and Female Genital Mutilation

Whilst **all** staff should speak to the designated safeguarding lead (or deputy) with regard to any concerns about female genital mutilation (FGM), there is a specific **legal duty on staff**. If a staff, 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.

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

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

Details regarding FGM

All staff have a statutory duty to monitor and report any concerns relating to Female Genital Mutilation and should report this directly in accordance with Keeping Children Safe in Education.

FGM is usually carried out on young girls between infancy and the age of 15, most commonly before puberty starts.

The procedure is traditionally carried out by a woman with no medical training. Anaesthetics and antiseptic treatments are not generally used, and the practice is usually carried out using knives, scissors, scalpels, pieces of glass or razor blades. Girls may have to be forcibly restrained.

There are four main types of FGM:

- Type 1 – clitoridectomy – removing part of or the entire clitoris.
- Type 2 – excision – removing part or all of the clitoris and the inner labia (lips that surround the vagina), with or without removal of the labia majora (larger outer lips).
- Type 3 – infibulation – narrowing of the vaginal opening by creating a seal, formed by cutting and repositioning the labia.
- Type 4 - Other harmful procedures to the female genitals, which include pricking, piercing, cutting, scraping and burning the area.

Effects of FGM

There are no health benefits to FGM. Removing and damaging healthy and normal female genital tissue interferes with the natural functions of girls' and women's bodies.

IMMEDIATE EFFECTS

- severe pain
- shock
- bleeding
- wound infections, including tetanus and gangrene, as well as bloodborne viruses such as HIV, hepatitis B and hepatitis C
- inability to urinate
- injury to vulval tissues surrounding the entrance to the vagina
- damage to other organs nearby, such as the urethra (where urine passes) and the bowel

FGM can sometimes cause death

LONG-TERM CONSEQUENCES

- chronic vaginal and pelvic infections
- abnormal periods
- difficulty passing urine, and persistent urine infections
- kidney impairment and possible kidney failure
- damage to the reproductive system, including infertility
- cysts and the formation of scar tissue
- complications in pregnancy and new-born deaths
- pain during sex and lack of pleasurable sensation
- psychological damage, including low libido, depression and anxiety (see below)
- flashbacks during pregnancy and childbirth

Symptoms of FGM

FGM may be likely if there is a visiting female elder, there is talk of a special procedure or celebration to become a woman, or parents wish to take their daughter out-of-school to visit an 'at-risk' country (especially before the summer holidays), or parents who wish to withdraw their children from learning about FGM.

Indications that FGM may have already taken place may include:

- difficulty walking, sitting or standing and may look uncomfortable.
- spending longer than normal in the bathroom or toilet due to difficulties urinating.
- spending long periods of time away from a classroom during the day with bladder or menstrual problems.
- frequent urinary, menstrual or stomach problems.
- prolonged or repeated absences from school or college, especially with noticeable behaviour changes (e.g. withdrawal or depression) on the girl's return
- reluctance to undergo normal medical examinations.
- confiding in a professional without being explicit about the problem due to embarrassment or fear.
- talking about pain or discomfort between her legs

Breast Ironing

Breast ironing, also known as breast flattening, is the pounding and massaging of a pubescent girl's breasts using hard or heated objects to try to stop them developing, or to make them disappear entirely.

Breast ironing is typically carried out by the girl's mother with the belief that she is:

- protecting her daughter from sexual harassment and / or rape;
- preventing the risk of early pregnancy, which would tarnish the family name;
- preventing her daughter from being forced into marriage, so she will have the opportunity to continue with her education.

This practice has been documented primarily in Cameroon, but is also practiced in Guinea-Bissau, Chad, Togo, Benin and Guinea.

While it is estimated that 3.8 million young women are vulnerable to breast ironing on a global scale, approx. one thousand 9 – 15 year old girls are currently thought to be at risk in the UK. According to the UN, 58% of perpetrators will be the victims' mother.

Breast ironing is extremely painful and can cause damage to the tissue. Other possible health implications include breast infections, the formation of abscesses, malformed breasts or the eradication of one or both breasts. The practice ranges widely in its severity, from using heated leaves to press and massage the breasts, through to using a scalding grinding stone to crush the budding gland. Due to the range of this activity, the short and long term health consequences for these young women vary from limited to significant.

Radicalisation and Extremism – PREVENT

As part of the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015, schools have a duty to 'prevent people being drawn into terrorism'. This has become known as the 'Prevent Duty'. Where staff are concerned that children and young people are developing extremist views or show signs of becoming radicalised, they should discuss this with the Designated Safeguarding Lead. The Designated Safeguarding Lead has received training about the Prevent Duty and tackling extremism and is able to support staff with any concerns they may have.

Pre Schools use the curriculum to ensure that children and young people understand how people with extreme views share these with others, especially using the internet. Pre Schools are committed to ensuring that their children are offered a broad and balanced curriculum that aims to prepare them for life in modern Britain. Teaching the Pre School's core values alongside the fundamental British Values supports quality teaching and learning, whilst making a positive contribution to the development of a fair, just and civil society.

Recognising Extremism:

Early indicators of radicalisation or extremism may include:

- showing sympathy for extremist causes
- glorifying violence, especially to other faiths or cultures
 - making remarks or comments about being at extremist events or rallies outside the Pre School
- evidence of possessing illegal or extremist literature
 - advocating messages similar to illegal organisations or other extremist groups
 - out of character changes in dress, behaviour and peer relationships (but there are also very powerful narratives, programmes and networks that young people can come across online so involvement with particular groups may not be apparent.)
- secretive behaviour
- online searches or sharing extremist messages or social profiles
- intolerance of difference, including faith, culture, gender, race or sexuality
- graffiti, art work or writing that displays extremist themes
- attempts to impose extremist views or practices on others
- verbalising anti-Western or anti-British views
- advocating violence towards others

New single phone number and email for concerns about children and young people

A single telephone number and email address for use by professionals and the public for all concerns relating to children, regardless of risk and complexity.

This is a new simplify the process for the public and professionals and has been designed to ensure that children's need are reviewed quickly by a joined up Early Help and Social Care Team.

Telephone Number 01403. 229900

Email address WSChildrenservices@westsussex.gov.uk

Safeguarding information for school and college staff - The following is a condensed version of Part one of Keeping children safe in education. It can be provided (instead of Part one) to those staff who do not directly work with children, if the governing body or proprietor think it will provide a better basis for those staff to promote the welfare of and safeguard children.

The role of school and college staff - Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is **everyone's** responsibility. **Everyone** who comes into contact with children has an important role to play. School and college staff are particularly important as they are in a position to identify concerns early, provide help for children, promote children's welfare and prevent concerns from escalating. It is important all staff (including those who do not work directly with children) recognise the important role they play in protecting children

What school and college staff need to know - For the purposes of safeguarding, a child is anyone under the age of 18. Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is defined for the purposes of this guidance as:

- protecting children from maltreatment
- preventing impairment of children's 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.

All staff should:

- Be aware of the systems in their school or college which support safeguarding, and these should be explained to them as part of staff induction. As a minimum this Annex and the child protection policy should be shared with staff at induction
- Receive appropriate safeguarding and child protection training (including online safety) which is regularly updated. In addition, all staff should receive safeguarding and child protection updates (including online safety) (for example, via emails, e- bulletins and staff meetings), as required, and at least annually, to provide them with the skills and knowledge to safeguard children effectively
- Know the identity of the designated safeguarding lead (and deputies) and how to contact them
- know what to do if a child tells them they are being abused or neglected. This includes understanding they should never promise a child that they will not tell anyone else about a report of abuse, as this is unlikely to be in the best interests of the child, and,
- should be able to reassure all 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 abuse, sexual violence or sexual harassment, nor should a victim ever be made to feel ashamed for making a report.
- 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. Children can also abuse other children online, this can take the form of abusive, harassing, and misogynistic/misandrist messages, the non-consensual sharing of indecent images, especially around chat groups, and the sharing of abusive images and pornography, to those who do not want to receive such content.

What school and college staff should look out for

Abuse and neglect – Knowing what to look for is vital to the early identification of abuse and neglect. **All** staff should be aware of indicators of abuse and neglect, including exploitation, so that they are able to identify cases of children who may be in need of help or protection.

Forms of abuse and neglect – **Abuse**, Physical abuse, Emotional abuse, Sexual abuse, Neglect

Safeguarding issues - **All** staff should have an awareness of safeguarding issues that can put children at risk of harm. Behaviours linked to issues such as drug taking and/or alcohol misuse, deliberately missing education, serious violence (including that linked to county lines), radicalisation and consensual and non-consensual sharing of nude and semi-nude images and/or videos (also known as youth produced sexual imagery) put children in danger.

Child-on-child abuse - **All** staff should be aware that children can abuse other children at any age (often referred to as child-on-child abuse). And that it can happen both inside and outside of school or college and online. It is important that all staff recognise the indicators and signs of abuse and know how to identify it and respond to reports.

What school and college staff should do if they have concerns about a child - Staff working with children should 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 interest** of the child. - Staff should not assume a colleague or another professional will take action and share information that might be critical in keeping children safe. - If staff have **any concerns** about a child's welfare, they should act on them immediately. - The designated safeguarding lead (or deputy) will generally lead on next steps, including who else on anyone, whether to pass a concern to the local authority children's care and or the police.

Why is all of this important? - It is important for children to receive the right help at the right time to address safeguarding risks and prevent issues escalating and to promote children's welfare. Research and serious case reviews have repeatedly shown the dangers of failing to take effective and immediate action. Examples of poor practice includes failing to act on and refer the early signs of abuse and neglect.

What school and college staff should do if they have a safeguarding concern or an allegation about another staff member who may pose a risk of harm to children - If staff have safeguarding concerns or an allegation is made about another member of staff (including supply staff, contractors, volunteers, and visitors) posing a risk of harm to children, they should speak to the headteacher or principal (unless it relates to them), in which case they should speak to another member of the school's or college's senior leadership team.

What school or college staff should do if they have concerns about safeguarding practices within the school or college - All staff and volunteers should feel able to raise concerns about poor or unsafe practice and potential failures in the school's or college's safeguarding regime and know that such concerns will be taken seriously by the senior leadership team. Appropriate whistleblowing procedures should be in place for concerns to be raised with the school's or college's senior leadership team.

Where staff feel unable to raise an issue with their employer or feel that their genuine safeguarding concerns are not being addressed [NSPCC whistleblowing advice line](#) is available. Staff can call 0800028 0285 – 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM, Monday to Friday and email: help@nspcc.org.uk.

Policy Adopted by Little Stars Pre School
Dated August 2025
Review Date Continuously Ongoing

Help for Settings

[Resources for education settings | CSA Centre](#)

Abuse

[Supporting practice in tackling child sexual abuse - CSA Centre](#) Centre of Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse has free evidence-based practice resources to help professionals working with children and young people to identify and respond appropriately to concerns of child sexual abuse.

[What to do if you're worried a child is being abused](#) – DfE advice [Domestic abuse: Various Information/Guidance](#) - Home Office (HO) [Faith based abuse: National Action Plan](#) - DfE advice [Disrespect NoBody campaign](#) - GOV.UK - Home Office website [Tackling Child Sexual Abuse Strategy](#) – Home Office policy paper [Together we can stop child sexual abuse](#) – HM Government campaign

Bullying

[Preventing bullying including cyberbullying](#) - DfE advice [Children missing from education, home or care](#)

[Children missing education](#) - DfE statutory guidance
[Child missing from home or care](#) - DfE statutory guidance [Children and adults missing strategy](#) - Home Office strategy

Children with family members in prison

[National Information Centre on Children of Offenders](#) - Barnardo's in partnership with HM Prison and Probation Service

Child Exploitation

[Trafficking: safeguarding children](#) - DfE and Home Office guidance

[Care of unaccompanied and trafficked children](#) – DfE statutory guidance

[Modern slavery: how to identify and support victims](#) – HO statutory guidance

[Child exploitation disruption toolkit](#) - HO statutory guidance

[County Lines Toolkit For Professionals](#) - The Children's Society in partnership with Victim Support and National Police Chiefs' Council

Confidentiality

[Gillick competency Fraser guidelines](#) - Guidelines to help with balancing children's rights along with safeguarding responsibilities.

Drugs

[Drug strategy 2021 - 2025](#) - Home Office strategy

[Information and advice on drugs](#) - Talk to Frank website

[Drug and Alcohol education — teacher guidance & evidence review](#) – PSHE Association **(so called) “Honour Based Abuse” including FGM and forced marriage**

[Female genital mutilation: information and resources](#)- Home Office guidance

[Female genital mutilation: multi agency statutory guidance](#) - DfE, Department for Health, and Home Office

[Forced marriage](#) - Forced Marriage Unit (FMU) resources

[Forced marriage](#) - Government multi-agency practice guidelines and multi-agency statutory guidance

[FGM resource pack](#) – HM Government guidance **Health and Well-being**

[Rise Above: Free PSHE resources on health, wellbeing and resilience](#) - Public Health England

[Supporting pupils at schools with medical conditions](#) - DfE statutory guidance [Mental health and behaviour in schools](#) - DfE advice

[Overview - Fabricated or induced illness](#) - NHS advice

Homelessness

[Homelessness code of guidance for local authorities](#) – Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities guidance

Information Sharing

[Government information sharing advice](#) - Guidance on information sharing for people who provide safeguarding services to children, young people, parents and carers.

[Information Commissioner's Office: Data sharing information hub](#) - Information to help schools and colleges comply with UK data protection legislation including UK GDPR.

Online safety-advice

[Childnet](#) provide guidance for schools on cyberbullying

[Educateagainsthate](#) provides practical advice and support on protecting children from extremism and radicalisation

[London Grid for Learning](#) provides advice on all aspects of a school or college's online safety arrangements

[NSPCC E-safety for schools](#) provides advice, templates, and tools on all aspects of a school or college's online safety arrangements

[Safer recruitment consortium](#) “guidance for safe working practice”, which may help ensure staff behaviour policies are robust and effective

[Searching screening and confiscation](#) is departmental advice for schools on searching children and confiscating items such as mobile phones

[South West Grid for Learning](#) provides advice on all aspects of a school or college's online safety arrangements

[Use of social media for online radicalisation](#) - A briefing note for schools on how social media is used to encourage travel to Syria and Iraq

[Online Safety Audit Tool](#) from UK Council for Internet Safety to help mentors of trainee teachers and newly qualified teachers induct mentees and provide ongoing support, development and monitoring

[Online safety guidance if you own or manage an online platform](#) DCMS advice [A business guide for protecting children on your online platform](#) DCMS advice

[UK Safer Internet Centre](#) provide tips, advice, guides and other resources to help keep children safe online

Online safety- Remote education, virtual lessons and live streaming

[Case studies](#) for schools to learn from each other

[Guidance Get help with remote education](#) resources and support for teachers and school leaders on educating pupils and students

[Departmental guidance on safeguarding and remote education](#) including planning remote education strategies and teaching remotely

[London Grid for Learning](#) guidance, including platform specific advice

[National cyber security centre](#) guidance on choosing, configuring and deploying video conferencing

[UK Safer Internet Centre](#) guidance on safe remote learning

Online Safety- Support for children

[Childline](#) for free and confidential advice

[UK Safer Internet Centre](#) to report and remove harmful online content [CEOP](#) for advice on making a report about online abuse

Online safety- Parental support

[Childnet](#) offers a toolkit to support parents and carers of children of any age to start discussions about their online life, and to find out where to get more help and support

[Commonsensemedia](#) provide independent reviews, age ratings, & other information about all types of media for children and their parents

[Government advice](#) about protecting children from specific online harms such as child sexual abuse, sexting, and cyberbullying

[Internet Matters](#) provide age-specific online safety checklists, guides on how to set parental controls, and practical tips to help children get the most out of their digital world

[How Can I Help My Child?](#) Marie Collins Foundation – Sexual Abuse Online

[Let's Talk About It](#) provides advice for parents and carers to keep children safe from online radicalisation

[London Grid for Learning](#) provides support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online, including tips to keep primary aged children safe online

[Stopitnow](#) resource from [The Lucy Faithfull Foundation](#) can be used by parents and carers who are concerned about someone's behaviour, including children who may be displaying concerning sexual behaviour (not just about online)

[National Crime Agency/CEOP Thinkuknow](#) provides support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online

[Net-aware](#) provides support for parents and carers from the NSPCC and O2, including a guide to social networks, apps and games

[Parentzone](#) provides help for parents and carers on how to keep their children safe online

[Talking to your child about online sexual harassment: A guide for parents](#) – This is the Children's Commissioner's parent guide on talking to your children about online sexual harassment

[#Ask the awkward](#) – Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre guidance to parents to talk to their children about online relationships

Private fostering

[Private fostering: local authorities](#) - DfE statutory guidance **Radicalisation**

[Prevent duty guidance](#)- Home Office guidance

[Prevent duty: additional advice for schools and childcare providers](#) - DfE advice

[Educate Against Hate website](#) - DfE and Home Office advice

[Prevent for FE and Training](#) - Education and Training Foundation (ETF)

[Extremism and Radicalisation Safeguarding Resources](#) – Resources by London Grid for Learning

Serious Violence

[Serious violence strategy](#) - Home Office Strategy

[Factors linked to serious violence and how these factors can be used to identify](#)

[individuals for intervention](#) – Home Office

[Youth Endowment Fund](#) – Home Office

[Gangs and youth violence: for schools and colleges](#) - Home Office advice

[Tackling violence against women and girls strategy](#)- Home Office strategy

[Violence against women and girls: national statement of expectations for victims](#) - Home Office guidance

Sexual violence and sexual harassment Specialist Organisations

[Barnardo's](#) - UK charity caring for and supporting some of the most vulnerable children and young people through their range of services.

[Lucy Faithful Foundation](#) - UK-wide child protection charity dedicated to preventing child sexual abuse. They work with families affected by sexual abuse and also run the confidential Stop it Now! Helpline.

[Marie Collins Foundation](#) – Charity that, amongst other things, works directly with children, young people, and families to enable their recovery following sexual abuse.

[NSPCC](#) - Children's charity specialising in child protection with statutory powers enabling them to take action and safeguard children at risk of abuse.

[Rape Crisis](#) - National charity and the umbrella body for their network of independent member Rape Crisis Centres.

[UK Safer Internet Centre](#) - Provides advice and support to children, young people, parents, carers and schools about staying safe online.

[Preventing Child Sexual Exploitation | The Children's Society.](#)

Harmful sexual behaviour

[Rape Crisis \(England & Wales\)](#) or [The Survivors Trust](#) for information, advice, and details of local specialist sexual violence organisations.

[NICE guidance](#) contains information on, amongst other things: developing interventions; working with families and carers; and multi-agency working.

[HSB toolkit](#) The Lucy Faithfull Foundation - designed for parents, carers, family members and professionals, to help everyone play their part in keeping children safe. It has links to useful information, resources, and support as well as practical tips to prevent harmful sexual behaviour and provide safe environments for families.

[NSPCC Learning: Protecting children from harmful sexual behaviour](#) and [NSPCC - Harmful sexual behaviour framework](#)- free and independent advice about HSB.

[Contextual Safeguarding Network – Beyond Referrals \(Schools\)](#) provides a school self- assessment toolkit and guidance for addressing HSB in schools.

[Preventing harmful sexual behaviour in children - Stop It Now](#) provides a guide for parents, carers and professionals to help everyone do their part in keeping children safe, they also run a free confidential helpline.

Support for Victims

[Anti-Bullying Alliance](#) - Detailed information for anyone being bullied, along with advice for parents and schools. Signposts to various helplines and websites for further support.

[Rape Crisis](#) - Provide and signpost to a range of services to support people who have experienced rape, child abuse or any kind of sexual violence.

[The Survivors Trust](#)- UK-wide national umbrella agency with resources and support dedicated to survivors of rape, sexual violence and child sex abuse.

[Victim Support](#) - Supporting children and young people who have been affected by crime. Also provides support to parents and professionals who work with children and young people – regardless of whether a crime has been reported or how long ago it was.

[Childline](#) provides free and confidential advice for children and young people. **Toolkits**

[ask AVA](#) - The Ask AVA prevention platform has been created to support education practitioners across the UK to develop and deliver a comprehensive programme to stop Violence Against Women and Girls.

[NSPCC](#) - Online Self-assessment tool to ensure organisations are doing everything they can to safeguard children.

[NSPCC](#) - Resources which help adults respond to children disclosing abuse.
NSPCC also provides free and independent advice about HSB: [NSPCC - Harmful sexual](#)

[behaviour framework](#)

[Safeguarding Unit, Farrer and Co. and Carlene Firmin, MBE, University of Bedfordshire](#) - Peer-on-Peer Abuse toolkit provides practical guidance for schools on how to prevent, identify early and respond appropriately to peer-on-peer abuse.

[Contextual Safeguarding Network](#) – self-assessment toolkit for schools to assess their own response to HSB.

[Childnet - STAR SEND Toolkit](#) equips, enables and empowers educators with the knowledge to support young people with special educational needs and disabilities.

[Childnet - Just a joke?](#) provides lesson plans, activities, a quiz and teaching guide designed to explore problematic online sexual behaviour with 9-12 year olds.

[Childnet - Step Up, Speak Up](#) a practical campaign toolkit that addresses the issue of online sexual harassment amongst young people aged 13-17 years old.

[NSPCC - Harmful sexual behaviour framework](#) An evidence-informed framework for children and young people displaying HSB.

[Contextual Safeguarding Network – Beyond Referrals - Schools](#) levers for addressing HSB in schools.

Sharing nudes and semi-nudes

[London Grid for Learning-collection of advice](#) - Various information and resources dealing with the sharing of nudes and semi-nudes.

[UKCIS Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people](#) - Advice for schools and colleges on responding to incidents of non-consensual sharing of nudes and semi-nudes.

Support for parents/carers

NCA CEOP [Thinkuknow](#): Advice/resources on how to deal with concerns about what children may be doing online including advice on how to help challenge harmful sexual attitudes and start a conversation to [support positive sexual behaviour](#).

