

Safeguarding INSET pack summary

Primary



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Statutory safeguarding guidance

Keeping Children Safe in Education

Statutory guidance for schools and colleges.

KCSIE 2026 will come into force on 1st September 2026.

We have summarised the changes using the headings, subheadings and paragraph references from the guidance.

Part one: Safeguarding information for all staff

Page 10, paragraph 13 - Updated to distinguish between community-based early help and targeted early help delivered through Family Help.

Page 11, paragraph 17 - Expanded examples of issues staff should remain alert to.

Page 12, paragraph 18 - Added “modern slavery.”

All staff should be aware of the indicators of abuse, neglect, exploitation and modern slavery, understanding that children can be at risk of harm inside and outside of the school/college, inside and outside of home, and online.

Page 12, paragraph 20 - Added “including physical, sexual, and emotional abuse, stalking” and “financial exploitation.”

Extra familial harms take a variety of different forms and children can be vulnerable to multiple harms including (but not limited to) sexual abuse (including harassment and exploitation), domestic abuse in their own intimate relationships (teenage relationship abuse - including physical, sexual, emotional abuse, and stalking), criminal exploitation (including financial exploitation), serious youth violence, county lines and radicalisation.

Page 13, paragraph 24 - Added additional sentence about child to parent or care giver abuse.

Children may also cause harm to other family members, often referred to as child to parent or care giver abuse.

Page 13, paragraph 26 - Clarified that emotional abuse may include verbal abuse (e.g., criticism, belittling, name-calling).

It may include verbal abuse, such as persistent criticism, belittling, or name-calling, as well as not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or ‘making fun’ of what they say or how they communicate.

Pages 13-14, paragraph 27 - Expanded section on sexual abuse to provide clear examples of physical contact.

The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example rape or penetration with an object) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing, and touching outside of clothing.

Statutory safeguarding guidance

Part one: Safeguarding information for all staff (continued)

Page 14, paragraph 29 - Clarified that safeguarding issues often overlap.

All staff should have an awareness of safeguarding issues that often overlap and can put children at risk of harm.

Pages 15-16, paragraphs 30-35 - Expanded child-on-child abuse content to emphasise that: it is a safeguarding issue for both victim and alleged perpetrator, it is preventable and it may involve serious physical harm or threats involving weapons.

Pages 16-18, paragraphs 36-42 - Expanded Child Criminal Exploitation and Child Sexual Exploitation content: “This can be committed or facilitated by an organised network or gang, and victims may identify as part of this group.”, “This may constitute modern slavery...” and a reference to Modern Slavery statutory guidance, including referral expectations. Added a new footnote defining county lines and linking to Home Office guidance.

Pages 17-18, paragraph 42 - Added “This can be committed by an individual or an organised network...” and “Most sexual abuse is committed by individuals known to the victim.” Added clarification that victims may be criminalised for actions taken under coercion. Added a footnote defining “organised network” (from the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse).

Pages 18-19, paragraphs 45-48 - Mental Health section: substantially updated.

Pages 19-20, paragraphs 49-52 - Serious Violence section: substantially updated.

Pages 20-21, paragraph 58 - Added additional info to bullet about managing any support for the child internally.

Managing any support for the child internally via the school or college’s own pastoral support processes, including considering where doing so does not place the child at additional risk, whether the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) should inform parents or carers to further support the child’s wellbeing.

Pages 21-22, paragraph 62 - Updated header and clarified when non-social-worker practitioners may lead assessments.

Alternatively, qualified lead practitioners (i.e. not a social worker) who may lead assessments before statutory intervention can continue to lead work with families up to and including section 17.

Pages 22-23, paragraph 66 - Added expectations regarding local assessment protocols.

As outlined in Working Together to Safeguard Children, local authorities, with their safeguarding partners and any relevant agencies, should develop, agree and publish local protocols for assessments and support.

Page 25, paragraphs 75-77 - Added references to “trainee teachers”.

Staff members (including supply staff, trainee teachers, volunteers, and contractors)

Statutory safeguarding guidance

Part one: Safeguarding information for all staff (continued)

Page 25, paragraph 76 - Added requirement to consider referral to the LADO.

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

- *This should be referred to the headteacher or principal, who will consider whether an onward referral to the LADO is required.*

Part two: The management of safeguarding

Page 32, paragraphs 102-104 - Data Protection: Updated to reflect the Data (Use and Access) Act 2025, effective from January 2026.

Pages 30-31, paragraphs 95-98 - Added new section on “Sport”.

Pages 32-34, paragraphs 105-116 - Added new section on “Regulations and safeguarding requirements relating to school premises”.

Page 37, paragraph 127 - Added expectations for robust DSL cover arrangements (e.g., confidential shared mailbox).

To ensure continuity of safeguarding responsibilities, schools should implement robust cover arrangements for periods when the designated safeguarding lead is unavailable due to illness, leave, or other circumstances. This could, for example, include a confidential shared mailbox or equivalent system to ensure that safeguarding concerns are received, monitored, and acted upon without delay.

Pages 38-41, paragraphs 138-150 - Added more detailed information about sharing information.

Pages 38-41, paragraphs 138-150 - Expanded guidance on information sharing, including risk assessment.

Pages 42-43, paragraph 158 - Added “racism” and “derogatory behaviour or other forms of physical violence and conflict.”

Preventative education is most effective in the context of a whole-school or college approach that prepares pupils and students for life in modern Britain and creates a culture of zero tolerance for sexism, racism, misogyny/misandry, homophobia, biphobia, sexual violence/harassment, derogatory behaviour or other forms of physical violence and conflict.

Pages 43-44, paragraph 160 - Added details on PSHE Association approved resources.

Statutory safeguarding guidance

Part two: The management of safeguarding (continued)

Pages 44-45, paragraph 163 - Updated definitions of online risk categories.

content: being exposed to illegal, inappropriate, or harmful content, for example: pornography, racism, misogyny, self-harm, suicide, antisemitism, radicalisation, extremism, extreme sexual or physical violence, misinformation, disinformation (including fake news) and conspiracy theories,

contact: being subjected to harmful online interaction with other users or generative AI applications that simulate this; for example: peer to peer pressure, commercial advertising and adults posing as children or young adults with the intention to groom or exploit them for sexual, criminal, financial or other purposes,

conduct: online behaviour that increases the likelihood of, or causes, harm; for example, making, sending and receiving explicit images, including those generated using AI and online bullying, and

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

Page 45, paragraphs 165-166 - Added guidance and resources on safe and effective use of Generative AI in education.

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

To complement this, the department, in partnership with the Chiltern Learning Trust and Chartered College of Teaching, have published [online resources](#) to help school and college staff to use AI safely and effectively. Module 3 provides important information on identifying and mitigating key risks associated with safeguarding, ethics, data protection, and intellectual property.

Pages 45-46, paragraph 168 - Added new section on “Mobile phone policy”.

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

Pages 46-47, paragraph 171 - Updated wording “...ensure that a review of their effectiveness is carried out at least once every academic year. Reviews should be carried out by the SLT member responsible for filtering and monitoring, with the support of the school’s DSL and IT support. They should include checks that filtering is working appropriately on all internet-connected devices in all relevant locations, and a record should be kept of these checks...”

Statutory safeguarding guidance

Part two: The management of safeguarding (continued)

Page 48, paragraphs 176-178 - Redrafted to improve clarity on information security.

Pages 49-50, paragraphs 186-189 - Added references to “trainee teachers”.

(including supply staff, trainee teachers, volunteers, and contractors)

Pages 50-51, paragraph 191 - Updated the list of factors that a school’s child protection policy should include.

Pages 50-51, paragraph 191 - Added reference to “misandry”.

Harmful sexual behaviour, sexual violence and sexual harassment - which may include misogyny/ misandry.

Pages 52-53, paragraphs 197-202 - Added new section on “Boarding and residential accommodation”.

Pages 53-54, paragraphs 203-205 - Updated section on reasonable force to reflect new restrictive intervention guidance.

Pages 55-56, paragraphs 208-213 - Updated content relating to alternative provision.

Pages 58-59, paragraphs 224-232 - Updated section on “Children requiring mental health support”.

Page 61, paragraph 242 - Highlighted the role of Virtual School Heads in improving attendance.

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

Page 62, paragraph 246 - Added new section on “Young carers” and their specific needs.

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

Pages 62-63, paragraphs 247-249 - Added further additional barriers that children with SEND may face.

These can include:

- *assumptions that indicators of possible abuse such as behaviour, mood and injury relate to the child’s condition without further exploration,*
- *these children being more prone to peer group isolation or bullying (including prejudice-based bullying) than other children,*

Statutory safeguarding guidance

Part two: The management of safeguarding (continued)

- the potential for children with SEND or certain medical conditions being disproportionately impacted by behaviours such as bullying, without outwardly showing any signs,
- communication barriers and difficulties in managing or reporting these challenges risks that they do not understand that what is happening to them is abuse,
- the need for intimate care or that these children are isolated from others,
- that these children are more likely to be dependent on adults for care, and
- these children may have issues over cognitive understanding – being unable to understand the difference between fact and fiction in online content and then repeating the content/behaviours in schools or colleges or the consequences of doing so

Pages 63-64, paragraph 250 - Added new section on safeguarding children with medical conditions.

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

Page 64-70, paragraphs 252-282 - Updated content on children who are LGB or gender-questioning.

Part three: Safer recruitment

Pages 79-80, paragraph 315 - Regulated activity section rewritten for clarity and to include volunteers. Regulated activity table updated to remove the 'supervision exemption' from regulated activity. This change has been made by the Crime and Policing Act 2026. Removed "DBS check types" section to avoid duplication.

Page 83, paragraph 325 - Added new bullet on DBS checks for volunteers in regulated activity Updated references from TRA Employer Access Service to DfE's Check a teacher's Record.

for newly appointed staff or volunteers who are engaging in regulated activity, pending the receipt of an Enhanced Certificate with Barred List information from the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) (and where all other relevant checks as per paragraph 311 have been carried out), **Page 48,**

Statutory safeguarding guidance

Part three: Safer recruitment (continued)

Page 83, paragraph 326 - Added “or within 30 calendar days of the issue date on the certificate.”

Pages 83-84 - Removed the DBS Criminal Record Checks and Barred List Checks flowchart as it was no longer factually accurate following the removal of ‘supervision exemption’ from regulated activity under the Crime and Policing Act 2026.

Page 92, paragraph 370 - Clarifies the type of DBS check a self-employed person is now eligible for.

If an individual working at a school or college is self-employed, the school or college should either obtain the DBS check, or request to see the certificate if the self-employed person has obtained their own check and ensure that the DBS check is at the level required by the school.

Page 93, paragraph 375 - Clarified categories of visitors to schools.

Schools and colleges receive a range of visitors. These include professionals such as educational psychologists, social workers, and other education-related practitioners, as well as educational visitors like guest speakers or performers. They may also host individuals connected to the site, including contractors working on the building or grounds, children’s family members, or others attending school events such as sports days.

Pages 94-95, paragraphs 381-387 - Volunteer Section rewritten to remove the ‘supervision exemption’ from regulated activity. This change has been made by the Crime and Policing Act 2026.

Pages 98-99, paragraphs 403-407 - Work experience supervision section rewritten for clarity and in response to the Crime and Policing Act 2026 change to the definition of regulated activity.

Page 99, paragraphs 408-410 - Moved former Annex D (homestay) into main body.

Page 101, paragraph 422 - Existing staff paragraph updated to include volunteers.

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

- *an individual working or volunteering at the school or college 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.*

Page 102, paragraphs 424-428 - Duty to refer section rewritten to include referrals about volunteers.

Page 102, paragraph 429 - Added reference to schools’ duties under the PSED.

Employers should continue to have regard to their duties under the PSED.

Statutory safeguarding guidance

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

Reference to “Trainee teachers” added throughout.

Pages 108-109, paragraphs 452-456 - Updated supply teachers, trainee teachers and all contracted staff section to make it clearer that schools and colleges share safeguarding responsibilities with third party organisations.

Pages 108-109, paragraphs 452-456 - New content setting expectations for handling concerns about trainee teachers.

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

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

Pages 123-124, paragraph 527 - Updated to clarify that all incidents involving the sharing of nude or semi-nude images require a safeguarding response, whether they are consensual or non-consensual.

- *taking a safeguarding approach in response to all incidents involving the sharing of nude or semi-nude images, regardless of whether they are consensual or non-consensual. All such incidents require a safeguarding response, with a proportionate approach that considers the age, development, and circumstances of the children involved, as well as any elements of coercion, exploitation or vulnerability.*

Page 124, paragraph 531 - Additional paragraph added on HSB (previously part of para 525)

The umbrella term ‘harmful sexual behaviour’ (HSB) is widely used in child protection and applies to behaviour occurring online, face-to-face, or both. HSB should always be considered within a child protection context.

Page 124, paragraph 532 - Added link to NSPCC resource providing advice on stages of typical sexual development and behaviour for different age groups.

Advice on stages of typical sexual development and behaviour for different age groups can be found in [Sexual development and behaviour in children | NSPCC Learning](#).

Page 125, paragraph 533 - Added link to resource for advice on responding to children who display sexualized behaviour.

Advice on responding to children who display sexualised behaviour is available in [Responding to children who display sexualised behaviour](#).

Statutory safeguarding guidance

Part five: Child-on-child sexual violence and sexual harassment (continued)

Page 127, paragraph 540 - Added further information on 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, and*
- *sexual intercourse without consent is rape.*

Pages 137-138, paragraph 575-581 - Updated header and expanded description of universal services and community-based early help.

Pages 138-139, paragraphs 582-592 - Added new section on “Referrals to Family Help”.

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

Pages 155 - 180 - Annex A (condensed Part one) removed, and replaced with previous Annex B.

Page 160 - Cybercrime section expanded with detail on CMA offences and national risks.

Page 161 - Domestic Violence content updated.

Pages 161-164 - Operation Encompass content updated.

Page 165 - Additional section added on “Temporary accommodation notification duty.”

Page 167 - Additional info added to paragraph on Channel to include clarification that information should be shared with the police.

Pages 169-170 - Serious violence content update

Pages 172-180 - Links added to examples of support for DSLs.

Statutory safeguarding guidance

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

Page 181 - Added expectations around DSL cover arrangements when the DSL is unavailable.

Pages 183-185 - Added further information to information sharing guidance.

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

Page 189 - Removed, Crime and Policing Bill Act 2026 made changes to regulated activity to remove the 'supervision exemption'. This means that any person volunteering in a school or college in a role that involves teaching, training, instructing or supervising children on more than 3 days in a month or overnight is now in regulated activity.

You can read more about the 2026 changes and access the full guidance [here](#).

Statutory safeguarding guidance

Working Together to Safeguard Children

A guide to multi-agency working to help, protect and promote the welfare of children.

The March 2026 version of the guidance is split into chapters which cover the following topics:

Chapter 1: A shared responsibility

Reinforced expectations on leaders to create inclusive, anti-discriminatory cultures and that practitioners are expected to challenge racism and discrimination.

There's also strengthened guidance on certain types of harm such as:

- abusive behaviour in intimate relationships
- coercive control
- more hidden harms such as child sexual abuse (CSA) and teenage relationship abuse

Factual changes include:

Page 19, paragraph 31 - Includes reference to police or the Crown Prosecution Service sharing information with other agencies involved in providing support and services to a child and their family, where appropriate.

Where the Police or the Crown Prosecution Service make decisions relating to the safety or wellbeing of a child, they should consider whether it is appropriate to share information with other agencies involved in providing support and services to that child and their family. Local guidance should be clear about how police share information where a decision is taken that there is no further action in relation to criminal proceedings and the reasons for this. Police and the lead practitioner for the child should discuss how this information is recorded and shared to support any further action that children's social care or other agencies may take to support the child.

Page 19, paragraph 34 - Added a reference to the Information sharing advice for safeguarding practitioners providing safeguarding services for children, young people, parents and carers.

Information Sharing: advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services for children, young people, parents and carers¹⁸ is non-statutory advice to be considered by practitioners alongside this guidance, and any guidance specific to their profession or service area.

Statutory safeguarding guidance

Chapter 2: Multi-agency safeguarding arrangements

Clarified that MASA responsibilities include children who are looked after. Clearer detail has also been provided on accountability structures and how safeguarding partners are inspected.

Clearer expectations have been set on analysing information to identify disproportionality and racism and strengthened requirements for data sharing.

The chapter makes explicit that annual reports must evidence their impact on children and families.

Factual changes include:

Page 25, paragraph 48 - Added Combatting Drugs Partnership to list of public boards supporting partnership work.

This will include but not be limited to other public boards, including Health and Wellbeing Boards, Adult Safeguarding Boards, Channel Panels, Improvement Boards, Community Safety Partnerships, the Local Family Justice Board, Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) Strategic Management Boards, Combatting Drugs Partnerships, Domestic Abuse Partnership Boards, Corporate Parenting Boards, Youth Offending Management Boards and, where relevant, Violence Reduction Units.

Page 36, paragraph 94 - Included the inspectorates who inspect safeguarding partners.

Safeguarding partners are inspected at a single agency level by their respective inspectorates; Ofsted, His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) and Care Quality Commission (CQC). These inspectorates, along with HMI Probation, also jointly inspect and report on the impact of local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements through the joint targeted area inspection (JTAI) programme.

Page 42, paragraph 115 - Updated email address for the Multi-agency Safeguarding Arrangements Unit.

Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements Unit (Child Protection and Safeguarding Division – DfE)
 MASA.partners@education.gov.uk

Statutory safeguarding guidance

Chapter 3: Providing help, support and protection

The chapter explains that family help combines targeted early help and section 17 support to create a more seamless offer for families, with consistent practitioner relationships and a family help plan led by a multi-disciplinary team.

Expectations for anti-racist and anti-discriminatory practice have been strengthened, recognising how racism and past experiences influence relationships.

Additional content covers domestic abuse, child sexual abuse, infants abuse and honour or faith or belief-based abuse, with strengthened child sexual abuse procedures and the use of family group decision-making.

New references address online harms and group-based exploitation. This section reinforces that children may face multiple harms simultaneously.

Section 47 has strengthened expectations for robust multi-agency assessments, direct work with the child and strategy discussions for child sexual abuse.

Guidance to emphasise that safeguarding and child protection apply to all children has been strengthened, and any assessments and planning should link to existing family help plans or care planning where appropriate.

Factual changes include:

Page 47, paragraph 136 - Added a reference to Families First Partnership programme

The Families First Partnership programme guide provides operational details on lead practitioner roles and responsibilities, and expectations for coordinating a multi-disciplinary team around the family.

Page 53, paragraph 150 - Included a reference to operational details on the lead practitioner role which can be found in the Families First Partnership Programme guide.

The Families First Partnership programme guide provides operational guidance for the delivery of multi-disciplinary Family Help teams. These teams should be embedded in communities to provide non-stigmatising access to a range of agencies and services that respond to different needs. The exact make up of these teams will vary, but local areas may want to co-locate teams in community settings such as their Best Start Family Hubs and networks.

Page 17, paragraph 30 - Added a reference to further guidance on Operation Encompass.

Operation Encompass places a duty on police forces in England and Wales to notify educational settings, and, where relevant, local authorities, if they have reasonable grounds to believe a child may be a victim of domestic abuse.

Page 48, paragraph 136 - Clarified the term 'family group decision-making'.

Family group decision-making is an umbrella term for voluntary, family-led decision-making forums in which a child's family network has all the resources, adequate preparation, relevant information and a safe and appropriate environment to make a plan in response to concerns about a child's safety and wellbeing, working alongside skilled professionals.

Statutory safeguarding guidance

Chapter 4: Organisational responsibilities

This chapter clarifies the vulnerability of looked after children in certain settings and reinforces the link between care planning and child protection planning.

The local authority's duty has been emphasised to ensure support and protection through the care plan and highlighted risks such as sexual exploitation. A new paragraph addresses risks in residential settings.

Factual changes include:

Page 116, paragraph 279 - Amended 'named practitioner' to 'named professional' or 'named health professional' for health provider organisations and agencies.

Named professionals have a key role in promoting good professional practice within their organisation and agency, providing advice and expertise for fellow practitioners, and ensuring safeguarding training is in place.

Page 123 - Removed the link to the National Information Centre on Children of Offenders (NICCO) website.

Page 123, paragraph 310 - Added a reference and link to [Prisoners' Families Helpline](#).

Prison staff may also use the Prisoners' Families Helpline to find local services who can support children who are impacted by parental imprisonment. Further support for families can be found at [Useful links | Prisoners' Families Helpline](#).

Chapter 5: Learning from serious child safeguarding incidents

This section has been re-structured and strengthened to ensure safeguarding partners better understand how and when to make timely, accurate and comprehensive notifications and engage in the learning process.

It sets out that notifications must be made, even if the names of child victims are not yet known. It states that all children should be included in the notification and the wider context should also be considered.

It also clarifies how to notify the death of a care leaver up to and including the age of 24 and provides guidance on notifying adults aged 18 or over where harm, abuse or neglect occurred in childhood but not reported or known at that time.

The revised text confirms that only the [Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel](#) decides on National Reviews and outlines the sequence from serious incident notification (SIN) to rapid review to local child safeguarding practice review.

It also sets expectations for learning from incidents that do not meet notification criteria and notes that rapid reviews may be shared with the government in exceptional cases.

The rapid review timeline has been updated to require submission within 15 working days of the SIN.

Statutory safeguarding guidance

Appendix A: glossary

Factual changes include:

Pages 163-164 - Added new definitions and policies for family group decision making (FGDM), group-based child sexual exploitation, honour-based abuse and kinship care arrangements.

Appendix B

Factual changes include:

Pages 168-172 - Added links to resources on the information sharing duty:

- Operation Encompass
- interim guidance for independent child trafficking guardians (ICTGs)
- child knife possession offences
- CSA centre guidance on communicating with children
- Prisoners' Families Helpline

You can access the full 2026 guidance [here](#). The Department for Education also released a summary of changes linked [here](#).

Types of abuse

The four main types of abuse and signs to look out for

The four main types of abuse are physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and neglect. There is often significant overlap between these - rarely would you be able to apply a single label to a child's situation.

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

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|---|
| Signs to look out for → | • Bruises | • Refusal to discuss injuries |
| | • Fractures or broken bones | • Keeping the body covered, even in hot weather |
| | • Burns or scalds | • Descriptions of excessive punishment |
| | • Bite marks | |

- Ask yourself:**
- Is the injury consistent with the child's age and mobility?
 - Does the injury match the story the child (or parent) is telling you?

Emotional abuse → Emotional abuse is 'the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and adverse effects on the child's emotional development.'

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|--|--|
| Signs to look out for → | • Delays in physical development | • Being aggressive or unkind towards other children |
| | • Marks on the body from self-harm | • Not having a close relationship with their parents or carers |
| | • Lack of confidence | |
| | • Struggle to regulate their emotions and have extreme outbursts | |
| | • Being overly affectionate or clingy towards strangers | |

- Ask yourself:**
- Are we labeling a child's trauma response - like sudden aggression or severe withdrawal - as just "bad behaviour" or defiance?
 - Does the child's presentation, anxiety level, or behaviour fundamentally shift when a specific parent, carer, or adult is present?

Types of abuse

Sexual abuse → Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening.

Signs to look out for →

- Soreness of the genital area
- Bleeding
- Abdominal pain
- Sexually transmitted infections (STIs)
- Pregnancy
- Age inappropriate sexual knowledge and language
- Avoid being alone with certain people
- Appear to be frightened of someone
- Reluctance to change in front of others

Ask yourself:

- Is this child displaying sexual knowledge, language, or behaviours that are completely inappropriate for their developmental age?
- Is there a sudden, unexplained shift in their behaviour, peer groups, or secrecy around their online life?

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.

Signs to look out for →

- Appearing dirty or smelling
- Wearing unwashed clothes
- Ill-fitting clothes or shoes
- Untreated injuries or medical issues
- Tiredness
- Constant hunger
- Poor self-esteem
- Missing developmental milestones
- Compulsive stealing
- Frequent truancy
- Poor relationships with peers

Ask yourself:

- Is this a one-off bad day, or am I looking at a persistent pattern of neglect?
- Is the child regularly lacking the basic essentials needed to learn and thrive - such as adequate food, appropriate clothing, or basic hygiene?

Types of abuse

Remember:

- ❗ **Abuse is not a checklist, it's a pattern.** While a single disclosure requires immediate action, remember that emotional abuse and neglect are often identified by noticing small, persistent behavioural or physical shifts over time.
- ❗ **Context matters.** Children may experience maltreatment within the home (familial), outside the home (known as extra-familial or contextual) or online.
- ❗ **Be professionally curious, not an investigator.** Your job isn't to prove abuse, cross-examine a child, or judge a family's circumstances. Your legal duty under the 2026 framework is simply to notice the gaps, trust your instinct, and report it.

Safeguarding issues

Mental health

Recent statutory safeguarding guidance recognises that “mental health problems can, in some cases, develop into safeguarding concerns. This could include self-harm, suicidal ideation or risk of suicide. They could also be an indicator that a child has suffered or is at risk of suffering abuse, neglect or exploitation.”

KCSIE 2026 expects every member of staff to support the fulfilment of 4 key roles.

1. Promote good mental wellbeing and prevent the onset of mental illness
2. Observe pupils and identify early those who may be experiencing mental health problems or being at risk of developing one
3. Ensure early targeted support is provided
4. Liaise with and/or refer to specialist services where needed

How can we promote positive mental health?

Make mental health known

Integrate wellbeing themes into assemblies, PSHE, and classroom check-ins to keep the conversation continuous.

Celebrate awareness days

Use events like World Mental Health Day or Children’s Mental Health Week to **promote positive mental health** and run pupil-led campaigns.

Signpost visible support

Display posters around the school to clearly show internal contacts, like our DSLs, and external helplines.

Prioritise early help and collaboration

Record low-level or emerging mental health changes on our internal system early, ensuring we catch vulnerable pupils before a crisis hits.

Safeguarding issues

Online safety

The breadth of issues classified within online safety is considerable and ever evolving, but can be categorised into four areas of risk:

- **content:** being exposed to illegal, inappropriate, or harmful content, for example: pornography, racism, misogyny, self-harm, suicide, antisemitism, radicalisation, extremism, extreme sexual or physical violence, misinformation, disinformation (including fake news) and conspiracy theories,
- **contact:** being subjected to harmful online interaction with other users or generative AI applications that simulate this; for example: peer to peer pressure, commercial advertising and adults posing as children or young adults with the intention to groom or exploit them for sexual, criminal, financial or other purposes,
- **conduct:** online behaviour that increases the likelihood of, or causes, harm; for example, making, sending and receiving explicit images, including those generated using AI and online bullying, and
- **commerce:** risks such as online gambling, inappropriate advertising, phishing and or financial scams. If you feel your pupils, students or staff are at risk, please report it to the Anti-Phishing Working Group (<https://apwg.org/>)

How can we help pupils navigate the online world safely and confidently?

Embed online safety and digital resilience across the curriculum

Integrate **media literacy** into PSHE. Teach pupils how to spot extreme influencer rhetoric and misinformation, while equipping them with clear strategies to report harm.

Engage and support parents and carers

Regularly share **resources** and **advice** to bridge the safety gap between school and home.

Signpost visible support

Display **internet safety posters** and refer to useful content so pupils know exactly how to report concerns or seek help.

Understand our **filtering and monitoring systems**

Ensure our systems actively block harmful online content while monitoring any concerning behaviour to catch patterns of concern early. KCSIE 2026 expects schools to review the effectiveness of their filtering and monitoring arrangements at least once every academic year, and this is one of the key messages introduced this year.

Safeguarding issues

Child-on-child abuse

All staff should be aware that **children can abuse other children**. This is a safeguarding issue for both the victim and alleged perpetrator.

It can happen anywhere - inside school, outside school, and online.

This can include:

- Bullying
- Abuse in intimate personal relationships between children
- Physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm
- Sexual harassment
- Consensual and non-consensual making or sharing of nudes or semi-nudes
- Upskirting
- Initiation/hazing type violence and rituals

How can we help prevent child-on-child abuse?

Be clear and consistent

Make sure to be clear regarding what is acceptable behaviour, language, and peer interaction.

Know the high risk “blind spots”

Try to be alert to when children might be at highest risk around the school day.

Maintain **professional curiosity**

Never assume that if there are no reports in our school, it is not happening.

Challenge inappropriate behaviours

It should never be ignored, accepted, dismissed or downplayed as “just banter”, “just having a laugh”, “part of growing up” or “boys being boys”.

Safeguarding issues

Domestic abuse

Domestic abuse creates an unsafe living environment for children and young people, regardless of whether they themselves are being physically harmed.

The extent of this impact is recognised by the **Domestic Abuse Act 2021** which identifies children who have been exposed to domestic abuse as victims themselves, rather than solely witnesses.

Operation Encompass

Operation Encompass is a safeguarding, information sharing partnership between the police and schools. The police are required to notify a school's DSL of an incident of domestic abuse before the start of the next school day.

If the DSL team shares a notification with you, it is strictly confidential. Your role is to provide a supportive environment, avoid questioning the child about the incident, and monitor their presentation.

How can we support a child who is being exposed to domestic abuse?

Stay alert and use **professional curiosity**

Children often do not recognise controlling or violent households as "abuse" because it is their normal. Use professional curiosity to read between the lines of subtle behaviour changes.

Explain healthy relationships

Teaching children and young people what a **healthy relationship** looks like will help them to recognise signs of abuse in their own relationships.

Maintain an ongoing, trusted relationship

If a child discloses domestic abuse, ensure you maintain open, non-judgmental communication. Never use victim-blaming language.

Support **Operation Encompass**

When information is shared with you, ensure you provide appropriate support in the classroom and stay alert to the child's behaviour.

Safeguarding issues

Supporting pupils who are questioning their gender

KCSIE suggests that schools should generally take a cautious and individualised approach to supporting children who are questioning their gender. The guidance also states:

- Schools should not initiate any action regarding social transition
- Parents or carers should usually be involved
- Schools should focus on safeguarding and wellbeing

Where a child's wellbeing or safety may be affected, schools should look to secure coordinated support, early help pathways and multi-agency involvement where appropriate, in line with Working Together to Safeguard Children guidelines.

Our responsibilities to support pupils questioning their gender:

Offer strong pastoral care

All children should feel safe, listened to and protected from bullying or harassment. Take a cautious, safeguarding-led and case-by-case approach.

No informal accommodations

Individual staff members must not make ad-hoc or informal adjustments in the classroom.

Follow the formal process

Avoid making immediate decisions in response to requests and instead ensure that concerns are managed through our safeguarding procedures.

Uphold single-sex spaces

To comply with statutory duties, children must not be permitted into toilets, changing rooms, or boarding or residential accommodation designated for the opposite biological sex.

Responding to and sharing concerns

How to respond to and share concerns

As someone who works with children, it is vital that you recognise when something might indicate a concern and that you then respond to those concerns.

Responding to a disclosure

If a child makes a disclosure:

Do	Don't
✓ Remain calm and level-headed ✓ Reassure the child ✓ Listen carefully and actively ✓ Let them know that you are taking what they say seriously ✓ Tell them what will happen next and what might happen as a result of their disclosure. Be honest about what you know and do not know ✓ Make a note of exactly what they have told you as soon as possible with dates and times ✓ Share the concern following procedure	✗ Promise to keep secrets ✗ Rush the child's account ✗ Ask leading questions or try to interview the child ✗ Make assumptions ✗ Show that you are upset or angry ✗ Show disbelief or dismiss them ✗ Talk negatively about the potential abuser

Sharing safeguarding concerns

If you have any concerns about a child, or they disclose information to you, then you should aim to report a concern to your DSL as soon as possible. It should be within 24 hours of it coming to your attention, if not sooner.

Responding to and sharing concerns

What to record

When recording a concern - to pass to your DSL or to make a direct referral - you should include the following:

- The name, age, gender, religion and ethnicity of the child.
- Any contextual information you know about the child or their life, for example, do they have a disability or are there factors outside of the home that have caused further concern?
- Details of the concern. Include as much relevant information as possible, whilst keeping the record concise.
- The date and time of the incident or disclosure.
- Who was involved or present at the time.
- Who said what: use their exact words. Remember, do not shy away from recording offensive language, if that is what has been said.
- Your name, role and contact details, as the person sharing the concern.
- Details of any immediate or agreed actions taken and whether or not a referral was made.
- Any conclusions that were drawn from the concern, incident or disclosure. Remember to separate out facts and professional opinion. When noting down a professional opinion, include details of why you formed that opinion. Do not use value judgement terms, which have no meaning, such as 'inappropriate'.
- If you are sharing this with the DSL, they will also add details of their decision process.

Ask yourself:

- Knowing how vital timely reporting is, what practical steps can you take to ensure urgent safeguarding concerns are logged immediately, rather than waiting until the end of the day or the next morning?
- Would you know exactly where to find the DSL if you had an emergency issue, and do you feel confident using our internal logging systems?

Remember:

- ❗ **Never ignore a concern.** You do not have to be right or sure or have definitive evidence.
- ❗ **Timely reporting is important.** Always make sure to log your concerns within 24 hours.
- ❗ **If in doubt, speak to your DSL.** You are never alone in making these decisions.

Safeguarding culture

Creating and maintaining an effective safeguarding culture

A **safeguarding culture** means that safeguarding is key to **every aspect of a setting**.

It can be found at the heart of a school's values and ethos, and is subsequently reflected in its environments and practices. For your school to have an effective safeguarding culture, these principles have to be lived, breathed, and constantly revisited.

Maintain an attitude of “it could happen here”

Whilst it is never a comfortable thought, it is essential that you always operate under the view that it could happen to children in your school. If we assume issues like abuse, grooming, or neglect don't happen in our community, we stop looking for the jigsaw pieces.

Be professionally curious

Maintain an open mind, ask proactive questions, and - crucially - have the confidence to respectfully challenge decisions if your gut tells you that something isn't right.

Use pupil voice

A setting may have all the correct statutory policies and procedures in place but if students do not feel safe or confident that they can access support, then the safeguarding is not effective. Here's some core questions to keep in mind when asking the pupils for their views:

- Do you feel safe in school? Is there anywhere in the school building where you don't feel safe?
- What are the toilets or stairwells like during break times? How does it feel in those spaces?
- Does bullying happen here? If it does, do you feel like staff deal with it quickly and consistently
- Are you aware of our behaviour policy, and do you feel it's fair?
- How is your attendance? Do you know why being here every day matters so much?
- How are you taught to stay safe, and what can you tell me about online safety?

Safeguarding culture

Ask yourself:

- How confident do you feel in the culture of safeguarding at your school?
- If a child or a colleague walked into our school today with a hidden burden, what is it about your daily behaviour, body language, or environment that signals to them: 'You are safe to speak to me'?
- It's very easy to accept a quick explanation like 'Oh, they're just tired today' or 'They're just having a bad week.' So how can we challenge ourselves to look past those easy explanations and dig a little deeper with professional curiosity?

Remember:

- ! **Every piece of the jigsaw matters.** A culture of safeguarding means recognising that your small observation might be the final piece a colleague needs to protect a child.
- ! **Develop a *professionally curious approach*.** Look past the surface of easy explanations - always be prepared to respectfully explore what isn't being said.

Further resources

Further resources and support

Statutory safeguarding guidance

- [Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026](#)
- [Essential guide to WTSC](#)
- [Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026](#)
- [Essential guide to KCSIE](#)

Types of abuse

- [Signs of abuse in children](#)
- [Guidance on child neglect](#)
- [Guidance on child sexual abuse](#)
- [Understanding why children may stay quiet about abuse](#)
- [How to teach children about healthy relationships](#)

Safeguarding issues

- [Mental health resource pack and posters \(PDFs\)](#)
- [How to promote positive mental health](#)
- [Child mental health quiz](#)
- [Child mental health training](#)
- [Internet safety posters for schools \(PDFs\)](#)
- [Understanding AI-generated abuse: deepfakes](#)
- [A guide to emojis and texting abbreviations \(PDFs\)](#)
- [Online safety and harms training](#)
- [What you need to know about child-on-child abuse](#)
- [A guide to misogyny in schools](#)
- [What parents and teachers need to know about the manosphere](#)
- [What you need to know about Operation Encompass](#)
- [The impact of domestic abuse on children](#)
- [Guidance for teachers on gender questioning children](#)
- [Guidance on filtering and monitoring in schools \(PDF\)](#)
- [Safeguarding scenarios and answers for education](#)

Further resources

Further resources and support

Responding to and sharing concerns

- [Child protection body map template \(PDF\)](#)
- [Responding to a disclosure poster \(PDF\)](#)
- [Safeguarding flowchart \(PDF\)](#)
- [Answering common questions about whistleblowing](#)
- [A guide to data protection for schools](#)
- [What is a Local Authority Designated Officer?](#)
- [Multi-agency working in safeguarding](#)

Culture of safeguarding

- [How to create an effective culture of safeguarding](#)
- [A guide to professional curiosity](#)
- [A guide to contextual safeguarding](#)
- [5 ways to maximise pupil voice](#)
- [The purpose of school policies](#)
- [Staff self-audit](#)

Training courses

- [Safeguarding courses](#)
- [CPD courses for teaching and education](#)



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We highly value your feedback to help us continuously improve our resources. Please share your thoughts on this Safeguarding INSET pack by completing our short survey, and you'll be entered into a draw to win a £50 Amazon voucher.

Access the feedback form [here](#).

