

# Protecting children in education settings



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Everyone who comes into contact with children and their families has a role to play in safeguarding children. School and college staff are particularly important as they are in a position to identify concerns early and provide help for children, to prevent concerns from escalating. Schools and colleges and their staff form part of the wider safeguarding system for children. Schools and colleges should work with social care, the police, health services and other services to promote the welfare of children and protect them from harm.

(Keeping children safe in education, Department for Education Guide)



## What is abuse and neglect?

Abuse is a form of maltreatment of a child under the age of 18. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused by an adult or adults or another child or children. The abuse may be physical, emotional or sexual.

## Why are staff working in education settings involved?

Members of staff in all schools whether maintained, non-maintained or independent schools, including academies and free schools, alternative provision academies, pupil referral units and maintained nursery schools have a duty to safeguard children from all social and ethnic backgrounds and to promote their welfare. This means protecting children from maltreatment, preventing impairment of children's health or development, ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care and taking action to enable all children have the best outcomes. They do this by ensuring that:

- schools and other services run by schools are safe places for children
- staff can identify children who may be in need of extra help or who are suffering, or are likely to suffer, significant harm and take appropriate action, working with other services, as needed
- allegations against staff are dealt with properly.

Each school and college has a designated safeguarding lead who provides support to staff members to carry out their safeguarding duties and who liaises closely with other services such as children's social care.

## What are child protection procedures?

These are rules that people working with children must follow. Southwark follows the same procedures as all London boroughs. All schools in Southwark should ensure that their safeguarding arrangements take into

account the procedures and practice of the local authority as part of the inter-agency safeguarding procedures set up by the Southwark Safeguarding Children Board (SSCB). Staff must report any concerns, which may include:

- any injuries or marks that cannot be explained or are not consistent with the explanation given
- any unusual behaviour
- physical punishment that is not reasonable or not appropriate
- worrying things said by or about the child, including those in social media.

### **What can parents and carers do to help?**

Children get the best from education services when staff, parents and carers are working together and there is good communication.

Please inform a member of staff if your child has an accident or illness or is upset by something that has happened at home or within the family.

If staff are worried about your child and there is no obvious explanation, their training will lead them to think about possible child abuse.

If a member of staff thinks a parent or carer will hurt a child because they are behaving badly, it will make it difficult to talk to the parent or carer about any behavioural concerns.

Children's behaviour tends to improve when they understand that staff, parents and carers are working together.

Staff in education settings must not physically punish children or display other abusive behaviour and/or language towards children and must have effective ways of encouraging good behaviour that can also be followed by parents and carers at home. If you have any concerns about any member of staff in any school, please discuss it with the headteacher. If your concern is about the headteacher, it needs to be shared with the chair of governors.

## **When children are behaving badly, are parents and carers allowed to smack them?**

The law entitles only the parents to use reasonable punishment. Any physical punishment is not reasonable if it involves:

- shaking the child
- hitting the child on the head or face
- making the child stand on one leg for long periods
- locking the child up
- hitting the child with an object such as a stick, cane or belt
- putting items like ginger or chilli in the mouth, eyes or other parts of the child's body
- causing a mark or injury to the child.

The above list and any physical punishment or threats that cause emotional harm to a child or any neglect is likely to be reported to children's social care as possible child abuse.

## **Are parents or carers informed before children's social care services are contacted?**

Where possible, staff will contact parents or carers before a child is referred to children's social care services. However, if they think this might put the child in more danger or that the police may need to be involved, staff may contact children's social care services first and discuss how to inform the parents or carers.

## **What happens after a referral is made?**

Children's social care services will find out more information from the family, the child and other services. Referrals can sometimes be upsetting for parents and carers, but please remember that if a child is referred to children's social care services, staff are not accusing anyone.

By sharing our concerns and acting quickly, we may prevent children from being seriously harmed and help families going through stressful times. Referrals may not always lead to further investigation, but staff must put the needs of children and young people first and not take any risks with the safety or welfare of your children, even if this means upsetting parents or carers.

### **Does a referral mean that the child will be removed from home?**

No. It is very unusual for a child to be removed from their home. The law says that everything possible should be done to help parents look after their children in their own homes. Children should only be removed if there is no other way of ensuring they can be protected from harm.

If the children's social care services' assessment shows serious concerns about possible abuse or neglect, a child protection conference will be held to agree a child protection plan. Family members, the school and other relevant agencies are invited to attend.

### **What can parents and carers do if they feel they have gone too far in punishing a child or are afraid they may harm their child?**

Support is available, and asking for help is often the first step to solving the problem. Talk to a teacher, centre manager, education welfare officer, a health visitor or your family doctor. They can provide more information on safeguarding your child.

Children's services provide support to families, children and young people who are in need.

## Some other specific safeguarding issues:

### Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

CSE is a type of sexual abuse in which children are sexually exploited for money, power or status. Children or young people may be tricked into believing they are in a loving, consensual relationship. They may be invited to parties and given drugs and alcohol. They may also be groomed online.

Some indicators of children being sexually exploited are: going missing for periods of time or regularly coming home late, regularly missing school or education or not taking part in education, appearing with unexplained gifts or new possessions, associating with other young people involved in exploitation, having older boyfriends or girlfriends, suffering from sexually transmitted infections, mood swings or changes in emotional wellbeing, drug and alcohol misuse and displaying inappropriate sexualised behaviour.

A child under the age of 13 is not legally capable of consenting to sex (it is statutory rape) or any other type of sexual touching. Sexual activity with a child under 16 is also an offence. It is an offence for a person to have a sexual relationship with a 16 or 17 year old if that person holds a position of trust or authority in relation to the young person.

Non consensual sex is rape, whatever the age of the victim. If the victim is incapacitated through drink or drugs, or the victim or his or her family has been subject to violence or the threat of it, they can not be considered to have given true consent and therefore offences may have been committed.

Child sexual exploitation is therefore potentially a child protection issue for all children under the age of 18.

## **Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)**

Female genital mutilation (sometimes referred to as female circumcision) refers to procedures that intentionally alter or cause injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. It has no health benefits and harms girls and women in many ways. It involves removing and damaging healthy and normal female genital tissue and hence interferes with the natural function of girls' and women's bodies. FGM causes severe pain and has several immediate and long term health consequences, including difficulties in childbirth also causing dangers to the child.

It is practised by families for a variety of complex reasons but often in the belief that it is beneficial for the girl or woman. FGM is practised in 28 African countries as well as in parts of the Middle East and Asia. The practice is illegal in the UK.

It has been estimated that over 20,000 girls under the age of 15 are at risk of FGM in the UK each year, and that 66,000 women in the UK are living with the consequences of FGM. The girls may be taken to their countries of origin so that FGM can be carried out during the summer holidays, allowing them time to "heal" before they return to school. Some girls may have FGM performed in the UK.

FGM is child abuse and a form of violence against women and girls.

## **Preventing radicalisation**

Local authorities have a legal duty to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism ("the Prevent duty"). Young people can be exposed to extremist influences or prejudiced views, in particular those via the internet and other social media. Schools can help to protect children from extremist and violent views in the same ways that they help to safeguard children from drugs, gang violence or alcohol.



## Private fostering

Private fostering is when a child under the age of 16 (under 18 if disabled) is cared for by someone who is not their parent or a 'close relative'. This is a private arrangement made between a parent and a carer, for 28 days or more. Close relatives are defined as step-parents, grandparents, brothers, sisters, uncles or aunts (whether of full blood, half blood or by marriage). Great grandparents, great aunts, great uncles and cousins are not regarded as close relatives.

The law requires that Southwark Council should be notified if anyone is looking after someone else's child for 28 days or more. The purpose of the council's involvement is to support the child and private foster family (and wherever possible the biological parent/s) with any issues arising. These may be practical issues such as benefits, housing, immigration or emotional issues such as keeping contact with biological family, maintaining cultural identity.

If you or your child is in a private fostering arrangement or if you are privately fostering a child or if you are aware of a child in a private fostering arrangement within Southwark, please notify the council's Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) by emailing **MASH@southwark.gov.uk** or calling **020 7525 1921**. If you would like advice about whether you need to notify the council, please call **07539 346808** or email **privatefosteringadvice@southwark.gov.uk**.

## Contact

If you are concerned that a child may be suffering or is likely to suffer harm, please contact Southwark's Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) duty desk on **020 7525 1921**.

Out of office hours: call **020 7525 5000** and ask to speak to a duty social worker.

## Other helpful agencies

### **Southwark Advocacy and Support Services (SASS)**

Supports all women and men who are suffering, or at risk of suffering, domestic and sexual abuse living in Southwark.

Tel: 020 7593 1290

Email: [southwark@solacewomensaid.org](mailto:southwark@solacewomensaid.org)

Website: <http://solacewomensaid.org/get-help/southwark/>

### **NSPCC Child Protection Helpline**

24 hour confidential freephone service for adults, children or young people to speak with someone anonymously (without giving your name).

Tel: 0808 800 5000

Text: on 88858

Email: [help@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:help@nspcc.org.uk)

Website: [www.nspcc.org.uk](http://www.nspcc.org.uk)

### **Childline**

24 hour confidential freephone service for children and young people offering information and support.

Tel: 0800 1111

## **Family Lives**

For information, advice, guidance and support on any aspect of parenting and family life, including bullying.

Parentline: 0808 800 2222

Email: [parentsupport@familylives.org.uk](mailto:parentsupport@familylives.org.uk)

Website: [www.familylives.org.uk](http://www.familylives.org.uk)

## **The Family Rights Group**

Advice for families whose children are involved with or need children's services because of welfare needs or concerns.

Tel: 0808 801 0366

Email: [advice@frg.org.uk](mailto:advice@frg.org.uk)

Website: [www.frg.org.uk](http://www.frg.org.uk)

**If you have questions or comments about this leaflet, or the safeguarding procedures, contact:**

### **Schools Safeguarding Coordinator**

Southwark Council

PO BOX 64529

London SE1P 5LX

Tel: 020 7525 2714/2715

Fax: 020 7525 2670

Visit: [www.southwark.gov.uk/safeguardingchildren](http://www.southwark.gov.uk/safeguardingchildren)

## This leaflet describes how we protect children in Southwark from harm and neglect.

For more information, please take this leaflet to any of the places listed. The receptionist will contact someone who speaks your language to explain this leaflet.

ক্ষতি ও অবহেলা থেকে কিভাবে আমরা সাদার্কের ছোট ছেলেমেয়েদের রক্ষা করে থাকি, এই প্রচারপত্রে সেটা বর্ণনা করা হয়েছে। আরও তথ্য পেতে হলে দয়া করে এই প্রচারপত্রটি নিয়ে নিচের ঠিকানাগুলোর যে কোনটাতে গিয়ে দেখা করবেন। সেখানকার রিসেপশনিস্ট একজন বাঙালী দোভাষীর সঙ্গে যোগাযোগ করবেন যিনি আপনার কাছে এই প্রচারপত্রে যা লেখা আছে সেটা বুঝিয়ে বলবেন। আপনার জন্য প্রচারপত্রের একটা লিখিত অনুবাদের ব্যবস্থাও তাঁরা করতে পারবেন।

*Bengali*

Bu broşür çocuğu ihmalden ve zarardan nasıl koruduğumuzu açıklamaktadır. Fazla bilgi için aşağıdaki yerlere başvurunuz. Resepsiyondaki görevli size yardımcı olabilir için dilinizi konuşan birisiyle temasa geçecektir.

*Turkish*

這份傳單說明我們怎樣保護在薩瑟克的兒童免受傷害和忽略。欲知詳細內容，請拿這份傳單到以下任何一個辦事處。接待處人員將與華語傳譯員聯絡，給你解釋這份傳單的內容。他們亦可以安排將這份傳單翻譯成中文給你。

*Chinese*

Ce prospectus vous explique l'action entreprise par Southwark dans le domaine de la protection de l'Enfance, contre les abus et les negligences. Si vous souhaitez davantage de renseignements, munissez vous de ce prospectus et presentez vous a l'une des addresses qui figurent au bas de ce document. On fera des lors appel a une personne de langue francaise qui vous donnera de plus amples informations sur le contenu de ce document. Nous pouvons de plus vous faire parvenir une traduction ecrite de ce document.

*French*

Este folleto le explica como protegemos a los niños en contra de negligencia y perjuicio en el barrio de Southwark. Para obtener más información acérquese con este folleto a una de las direcciones que aparecen en la lista de abajo. La persona en la recepción se pondrá en contacto con el intérprete pertinente (por ejemplo, el de habla francesa) para que le explique el contenido del folleto. También se podría arreglar una traducción del mismo.

*Spanish*

Tập tài liệu này giải thích chúng tôi che chở các trẻ em tại Southwark miễn bị làm tổn thương hay bị sao lãng như thế nào. Nếu muốn được tin tức thêm hãy mang tờ tài liệu này đến bất kỳ một địa điểm dưới đây. Nhân viên phòng tiếp nhận tại đó sẽ liên lạc thông dịch viên giải thích nội dung tập tài liệu này cho quý vị. Họ cũng có thể sắp đặt phiên dịch tập tài liệu này thành tiếng Việt cho quý vị.

*Vietnamese*

### MySouthwark Customer Service Points

Bermondsey: 11 Market Place 'The Blue', Southwark Park Road, SE16 3UQ

Peckham: 122 Peckham Hill Street, SE15 5JR

Walworth: 376 Walworth Road, SE17 2NG

**If you would like this information in large print, or in another format, please phone 020 7525 2715.**