
CHILD PROTECTION SUPPORT SERVICE

School Governors Handbook

Safeguarding & Child Protection

*This handbook has been developed by the
EA Child Protection Support Service and the Department of Education*

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1 INTRODUCTION

“In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be of primary consideration”

Article 3 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

This handbook is intended to assist school governors in fulfilling their statutory responsibilities regarding their safeguarding and child protection role, in order to promote clarity and consistency of approach in all schools.

Recent public enquiries into child death and child abuse have highlighted the need for everyone to take responsibility for safeguarding and protecting children. In addition it is necessary for those in key positions to have a clear understanding of their role in adhering to policy and procedures.

Awareness of the public and schools’ staff in matters relating to child abuse continues to grow in light of lessons learned from high profile cases of child abuse, and a context of living in a digital world. Legislation, guidance and policy have developed in response to this growing awareness and high priority is now given to the safeguarding and child protection role of schools.

In recognition of the key role that school plays in the life of a child, school governors and managers of schools must ensure that safeguarding systems are tailored to the needs of their pupil population, and that all children and young people feel safe in this environment.

This handbook outlines the key safeguarding and child protection legislative, policy and guidance context in education. It explains what this means for you as a governor, and identifies the key safeguarding and child protection professionals in a school setting.

Safeguarding begins with *preventing* harm occurring through early identification of risk and appropriate, timely intervention. A safeguarding school culture is a child-centred one that *promotes* the welfare of all pupils. It includes support to families and early intervention to meet the needs of children, and continues through to *protecting* children from harm when this is required.

Child Protection is a part of safeguarding and promoting welfare. This refers to the activity that is undertaken to protect *specific* children who are suffering or likely to suffer, significant harm.

A child in need of protection is a child who is at risk of, or likely to suffer, significant harm which can be attributed to a person or persons or organisation, either by an act of commission or omission.

2 THE LAW IN NORTHERN IRELAND

There is a broad range of international and domestic legislation relating to child welfare and protection.

The Children (NI) Order 1995 is the principle statute governing the care, upbringing and protection of children in Northern Ireland. It clearly identifies the welfare of the child as being of paramount importance.

The Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 2003 places a statutory duty on Boards of Governors to:

- Safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils
- Have a written child protection policy
- Specifically address the prevention of bullying in school discipline policies

This is the legislation relating specifically to Boards of Governors. It may be helpful for all governors to have access to a copy of Articles 17, 18 and 19. See DE web page at <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/circular-200313-welfare-and-protection-pupils-education-and-libraries-ni-order-2003>

The Safeguarding Board Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 places interagency co-operation on a statutory footing. The objective of the Safeguarding Board Northern Ireland (SBNI) is to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people in NI by coordinating and ensuring the effectiveness of what is done by each person or body represented on the board. Further information about the SBNI can be obtained at <https://www.safeguardingni.org/>

Children's Service Co-operation Act (Northern Ireland) 2015 requires co-operation among certain public authorities and other persons in order to contribute to the well-being of children and young persons.

Public Services Ombudsman Act (Northern Ireland) 2016

From April 2017 the remit of the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO) has included the investigation of complaints from members of the public in relation to maladministration in publicly funded schools. A revised model School Complaints Procedure is available on the Education Authority website.

The Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (NI) 2016

This legislation which is likely to be enacted in the academic year 2019/20 provides a common definition of bullying for schools to use; requires all schools to centrally record incidents of bullying, their motivation and their outcome; and requires BOGs collectively to take responsibility for the development, implementation, monitoring and periodic review of the school's anti-bullying policies and procedures.

School governors are obligated to acknowledge and work within the relevant guidance and procedural documents that have been produced by the Department of Education (DE) and the Department of Health (DOH).

3. GUIDANCE, POLICY AND PROCEDURES TO HELP YOU UNDERSTAND THE LAW RELATING TO SAFEGUARDING AND CHILD PROTECTION

- **Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young people in NI (DOH 2017)**
This provides the revised policy position on safeguarding and child protection arrangements in Northern Ireland. It sets out how agencies should co- operate to promote children’s welfare and to protect them from abuse and/or neglect.
- **Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland - Regional Core Child Protection Policy and Procedures (2017)** These Child Protection Policies and Procedures apply to all agencies and detail a range of child protection processes including those relating to referrals and investigations, child protection case conferences and child protection registration.
<https://www.proceduresonline.com/sbni/>
- **Safeguarding and Child Protection – A Guide for Schools (DE 2017 Updated September 2019)**
This is a key guidance document for schools on the management of safeguarding and child protection issues in a school setting. All Governors should familiarise themselves with the document.
- <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/safeguarding-and-child-protection-schools-guide-schools>

New and updated guidance in relation to safeguarding and child protection including DE circulars and letters can be found using the following web page link:

<https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/topics/support-and-development/child-protection-and-safeguarding>

4 WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR YOU AS A SCHOOL GOVERNOR?

A Board of Governors must ensure that:

- There are written child protection/ safeguarding policies and procedures which are ratified by the board of governors. The child protection policy should be reviewed annually; and parents and pupils receive a copy of the child protection policy and complaints procedure every 2 years.
- A report on all child protection/ safeguarding activity is presented, at least annually, as an agenda item to the board of governors.
- There is a designated teacher (DT) and deputy designated teacher(s) (DDT) for child protection/ safeguarding in the school who form part of the school safeguarding team. The DT should also lead the review of child protection and safeguarding policies and report annually to the governors.
- There is a designated governor who has responsibility for safeguarding.
- That Governors have attended the relevant training as outlined in section 9 of this handbook.
- All members of the board of governors should have a copy of:
 - (i) The child protection / safeguarding policy and procedures;
 - (ii) DE Circular 2017/04 (updated September 2019), Safeguarding and Child Protection;
 - (iii) Current child protection/safeguarding circularsⁱ and letters of advice issued by DE; School Governors' Handbook on Child Protection.
- Governors should ensure they have a full understanding of the roles of the Designated and Deputy Designated Teachers for Child Protection.
- Safeguarding and child protection training has been given to all staff.
- There is a code of conduct for all adults working in the school (whether paid or unpaid).
- All staff on the payroll of the school and unsupervised volunteers are appropriately and suitably vetted in compliance with the relevant Department circulars.
- Appropriate procedures are in place to manage the recruitment and supervision of all volunteers.
- Appropriate risk assessment procedures are in place.
- The school ensures the safety of all, through the security of the site and buildings.

- The names of the DT and DDT(s) are known to all staff, learners, and parents/carers.
- The Record of Child Abuse Complaints (allegations against staff) is made available to them at least annually.
- The school maintains secure records of:
 - (i) Child protection concerns
 - (ii) Disclosures of abuse
 - (iii) Complaints against staff
 - (iv) Staff induction and training
- The Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (NI) 2016 (to be enacted) will place a statutory duty on Boards of Governors to keep a record of all incidents of bullying or alleged bullying involving a registered pupil at the school.
- The prevention of bullying must be specifically addressed in school behaviour management policies.

NB: Governors of schools that are involved in initiatives such as Extended Schools, Full Service Schools, or Boarding Departments, must ensure that the implications for safeguarding their pupils in the extended environment are fully addressed and included in the school's child protection policy.

5 WHO IS WHO IN THE SAFEGUARDING TEAM?

It is important to acknowledge that all adults working in the school have a responsibility to promote and safeguard the welfare of children.

Within the school setting there are key governors and staff who are delegated with enhanced responsibility for child protection.

5.1 School Safeguarding Team

In the best interests of the children, and as a support for the Designated Teachers, the school should establish a *Safeguarding Team*. This team should include the Chair of the Board of Governors, the Designated Governor for Child Protection, the Principal (as Chair), the Designated Teacher and the Deputy Designated Teacher. The team may co-opt other members as required to help address specific issues e.g. the SENCO, ICT co-ordinator, etc.

The Safeguarding Team is a vehicle for ensuring effective co-ordination and co-operation between the key individuals responsible for safeguarding throughout the school.

The EA Child Protection Support Service (CPSS) provides child protection training in relation to the specific responsibilities of each member of the Safeguarding Team.

The responsibilities of the Safeguarding Team should include;

- The monitoring and periodic review of safeguarding and child protection arrangements and systems in the school.
- Support for the Designated/Deputy Designated Teacher in the exercise of their child protection responsibilities, including recognition of the administrative and emotional demands of the post.
- Ensuring attendance of Governors and staff at relevant training – including refresher training – in keeping with legislative and best practice requirements.

As best practice, the Safeguarding Team should review their child protection/safeguarding practices annually using the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) pro-forma entitled 'Guidance for the evaluation of child protection/safeguarding' which is available at:

<https://www.eti.gov.uk/articles/safeguarding>

Schools may also find it useful to undertake an audit of school practices in the area of emotional health and wellbeing using the audit tool to which DE Circular 2018/07 refers. This Circular is available at <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/circular-201807-self-assessment-audit-tool-schools>

5.1.1 Chair of Board of Governors

The Chair of the Board of Governors plays a pivotal role in contributing to the creation and maintenance of a safeguarding ethos within the school environment.

In the event of a child protection complaint/allegation being made against the principal, it is the Chairperson who must assume lead responsibility for managing the complaint/allegation - in keeping with DE Circular 2015/13 "Dealing with Allegations of Abuse against a Member of Staff". It is recommended that the chair seek guidance from CPSS officers and the employing authority before commencing the investigation of such a complaint.

The Chairperson is responsible for ensuring child protection records are kept and for signing and dating the Record of Child Abuse Complaints annually, even if there have been no entries.

5.1.2 Designated Governor for Child Protection

The Board of Governors will delegate a specific member of the governing body to take the lead in child protection/safeguarding governance issues in order to be able to advise the governors on:

- The role of the designated teacher
- The content of safeguarding and child protection policies
- The content of a code of conduct for adults within the school
- The content of termly updates and full Annual Child Protection Report
- Recruitment, selection, vetting and induction of staff.

5.1.3 School Principal

The Principal, as the secretary to the Board of Governors, will assist the Board of Governors to fulfil its safeguarding and child protection duties, keeping them informed of any changes to guidance, procedure or legislation relating to safeguarding and child protection, ensuring any Circulars and guidance from the Department of Education is shared promptly, and termly inclusion of child protection activities on the BOG meeting agenda. In addition, the principal takes the lead in managing child protection concerns relating to staff.

The principal has the delegated responsibility for establishing and managing the safeguarding systems within the school. This includes the appointment and management of suitable staff to the Designated and Deputy Designated Teacher posts, and ensuring that new staff and volunteers have safeguarding and child protection awareness sessions as part of an induction programme.

The principal must ensure that parents and pupils receive a copy, or summary, of the Child Protection Policy and Complaints Procedures at intake and, at a minimum, every 2 years. It is essential that there is protected time and support to allow the Designated Teachers (DTs) to carry out this important role effectively and that DTs are selected based on knowledge and skills required to fulfil the role.

5.1.4 Designated Teacher for Child Protection

Every school is required to have a Designated Teacher with responsibility for child protection. This is a highly skilled role developed and supported through training and support from the CPSS. The role requires knowledge, skills and professional judgement on complex and emotive issues. It involves working together to:

- The induction and training of all school staff including support staff.
- Be available to discuss safeguarding or child protection concerns of any member of staff.
- Responsibility for record keeping of all child protection concerns.
- Make referral to Social Services Gateway Team or PSNI Central Referral Unit as appropriate.
- Liaise with the EA Designated Officers for Child Protection.
- Keep the school principal informed.
- Lead responsibility for the development of the school's child protection policy.
- Promotion of a safeguarding ethos in the school.
- Compile annual reports to the Board of Governors regarding Child Protection.

Reporting to Board of Governors

It is best practice that child protection is a standing agenda item for Board of Governor meetings and that the Designated Teacher prepares a report for the meeting of all child protection activities and a full annual report for the Board of Governors on all child protection matters.

The Annual Child Protection Report should include:

- **Child Protection/Safeguarding Activity**
 - (i) number of complaints of a child protection nature against staff
 - (ii) number of referrals to Social Services/PSNI
 - (iii) number of children on the child protection register (known to the school)

All reports must be anonymised in keeping with the principle of confidentiality.

- **Child Protection Training**
 - Designated / Deputy Designated Teacher
 - Principal
 - Governor
 - Whole School Training
 - Volunteers
- Policy Reviews / Updates
- Safeguarding/ Child Protection initiatives delivered as part of the schools preventative curriculum

5.1.5 Deputy Designated Teacher for Child Protection

The role of the Deputy Designated Teacher is to work co-operatively with the Designated Teacher in the fulfilment of his/her responsibilities.

It is important that the Deputy Designated Teacher works *in partnership* with the Designated Teacher so that he/she develops sufficient knowledge and experience to undertake the duties of the Designated Teacher when required. Deputy Designated Teachers are also provided with the same specialist training by CPSS to help them in their role.

Schools may have more than one Deputy Designated Teacher depending on their size, location (e.g. split site schools), and the presence of an additional provision such as a nursery unit, speech and language unit, boarding department or other provision.

6 CHILD PROTECTION SUPPORT SERVICE (CPSS)

The CPSS is a regional service. It is based within the EA Directorate of Children and Young People's Services.

The CPSS primary role is to provide:

- A daily helpline to advise, guide and support DTs/DDTs/Principals in relation to concerns about individual children with safeguarding/child protection concerns and on wider policy and training matters.
- Initial, refresher and cluster group training on child protection issues.
- Support visits to schools where required.
- Advice and guidance on the assessment and management of children who pose a significant risk of harm to themselves, other pupils and staff.
- Dissemination of new information on training, DE circulars and guidance.
- Support in developing or reviewing the school's child protection policy.
- Follow up to ETI inspections where child protection/safeguarding is identified as an area for improvement.

The CPSS will also:

- Provide training to the Chairperson and Designated Governor for Child Protection in relation to their statutory child protection/safeguarding responsibilities.
- Provide support, training and advice to other services within the EA.
- Assist EA HR Business Partners in dealing with allegations of abuse against teachers and other EA officers/employees
- Liaise with Social Services and PSNI where appropriate.
- Represent the education sector at a range of multi-agency safeguarding fora.

Contact details for the CPSS are included in the contacts section.

7 WHAT SHOULD YOUR CHILD PROTECTION POLICY INCLUDE?

The Board of Governors must ensure that parents and pupils receive a copy, or summary, of the Child Protection Policy and Complaints Procedures at intake and, at a minimum, every 2 years. The child protection policy is one of a suite of safeguarding policies and should set out clearly the procedures to be followed in cases of suspected abuse, drawing on the guidance provided by the Department of Education, the Education Authority, the Department of Health, the appropriate employing authority and the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland.

A school's child protection policy must be a 'living document' providing a secure framework within which all staff work. It reflects the values to which the school community is committed and how the school is fulfilling its statutory responsibilities in safeguarding children.

The school policy should include:

- The school's safeguarding/child protection ethos.
- Definitions and potential signs and symptoms of abuse including Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and domestic violence.
- The roles of the Designated and Deputy Designated Teachers and appropriate contact details for them.
- The reporting process for Child Protection concerns i.e. who to report to and what to record.
- The reporting process for concerns about school staff or volunteers.
- How a parent can raise a concern about child protection/safeguarding.
- Details of the safe recruitment measures used.
- Reference to a Code of Conduct for all staff and volunteers.
- The school's approach to "The Preventative Curriculum".
- Reference to other safeguarding policies e.g. safe handling, intimate care, educational visits, digital safeguarding, anti-bullying, mobile learning, whistleblowing, attendance, and safe environment.
- Specific issues e.g. extended school activity, boarding department.

8 WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE EDUCATION TRAINING INSPECTORATE (ETI)?

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) provides independent inspection services and policy advice for the Department of Education and a number of other government departments.

The Chair of the Board of Governors is notified when an inspection is announced. An Inspector surveys pupil welfare/safeguarding arrangements within the school, of which some will relate specifically to child protection.

An ETI safeguarding pro-forma is sent to the school prior to the inspection visit. It is intended to establish the extent to which the school complies with child protection/safeguarding requirements and how the arrangements reflect best practice in all aspects of safeguarding children and young people. The completed questionnaire forms the basis of discussion about pupil welfare and safeguarding provision, and a copy should be made available to the Inspector at the start of the visit. There are three components:

- Whole Organisation
- Communication and Record Keeping
- Children/Young People and Parents

The Inspectors meet separately with the governors on the first day of the inspection. The Inspector will ask governors questions relating to the safeguarding and child protection systems and processes within their school. An in depth evaluation and report will be provided indicating the ETI findings. A follow-up inspection, if required, will be carried out normally within 18-24 months. If, however, significant pupil welfare or child protection issues are identified during the inspection, a follow-up inspection on these issues will take place within a period of 6-8 weeks.

<https://www.etini.gov.uk/articles/safeguarding>

<https://www.eani.org.uk/school-management/school-governors>

9 CHILD PROTECTION TRAINING FOR SCHOOL GOVERNORS

Child Protection training for school governors has three specific components:

1. Initial Child Protection Awareness Training. This awareness training may be led by the Principal or the Designated Teacher for child protection. A six slide presentation with accompanying notes has been designed for this purpose. This presentation will also be used during the Induction Training Course for new governors and can be accessed by following the link below.

<https://www.eani.org.uk/training-and-support-materials-for-members-of-board-of-governors>

2. Safeguarding role of Chair and Designated Governor for Child Protection: Facilitated by the EA CPSS
3. Training on recruitment, selection and vetting (including Child Protection legislation and DE guidance for governors on interview and appointment panels) delivered by EA Human

Resources. The Chair Governors needs to ensure that at least one governor on each interview panel has attended this.

Online training programmes are available for Governors on EA website at:

<https://www.eani.org.uk/services/eatv/governor-videos/governors-support>

These programmes include an introduction to child protection and 2 programmes in relation to Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE). It is recommended that Governors should access the CSE programmes at least once in every term of office.

These programmes are to provide additional information and support to Governors rather than act as a substitute for the child protection training outlined above.

The governor training programme can be found on the EA website at:

<https://www.eani.org.uk/training-and-support-materials-for-members-of-board-of-governors>

10 WHERE DO I GET HELP?

The Education Authority:

Child Protection Support Service Telephone Number: 028 95985590

Resources

To support the guidance in Circular 2017/04, Updated September 2019 (Safeguarding and Child Protection in Schools - A Guide for Schools,) there are a range of resources available on the DE website:

<https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/topics/support-and-development/child-protection-and-safeguarding>

Further helpful websites:

<https://www.eani.org.uk/school-management/school-governors>

<https://www.eani.org.uk/school-management/safeguarding-and-child-protection>
