

## **Supporting a Child with Mental Health Issues: Reporting Mechanisms & Children's Rights**

When supporting a child with mental health issues in a school setting, reporting mechanisms must align with children's rights, rightful presence, safeguarding, GDPR, confidentiality, and their right to continue accessing education. Senior leadership plays a critical role in escalating concerns to external agencies and ensuring a support plan is created and implemented.

### **1. Child's Rights (UNCRC - United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child)**

- Right to education (Article 28): Schools must ensure that mental health challenges do not lead to exclusion.
- Right to health (Article 24): Children should receive mental health support and early intervention.
- Right to privacy (Article 16): Confidentiality must be maintained when handling mental health reports.
- Right to be heard (Article 12): Children should be involved in decisions about their mental health support.

#### **Role of Senior Leadership:**

- Ensure reporting mechanisms protect children's rights and prioritise support over exclusion.
- Actively involve pastoral care, SENCO, and safeguarding teams in discussions about support.
- Advocate for a child-centred approach to mental health support and uphold lawful obligations.

### **2. Rightful Presence & The Right to Continue Education**

A child with mental health issues must be supported to remain in school and should not be excluded due to their needs. Schools must implement reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act 2010 to support their continued education.

#### **Senior Leadership's Role in Preventing Exclusion:**

- Ensure exclusion is not used as a response to a child's mental health challenges.
- Facilitate flexible learning arrangements as agreed with family and outside agencies, such as:
  - Reduced timetables (if beneficial for well-being)
  - Quiet spaces for emotional regulation
  - Home-school links for blended learning
- Lead on creating Personal/Pupil Support Plans (PSPs) to provide structured support.
- Ensure staff are trained to support children's mental health without punitive measures (highlighted in Team Teach, where cover is concerned Senior Leadership will guide the staff on the PSP implementation).

### **3. Safeguarding (Children Act 1989, 2004; Keeping Children Safe in Education - UK)**

Schools have a legal duty to safeguard children from harm, including risks linked to mental health such as self-harm, neglect, or suicidal thoughts.

#### **Escalation to External Agencies by Senior Leadership**

- When mental health concerns reach a significant level, the Designated Safeguarding Teacher (DST) and senior leadership team (SLT) should:
  - Assess risk levels – If a child is at immediate risk, escalate concerns urgently.
  - Refer to external agencies such as:
    - CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) for clinical intervention.
    - Social Services if there are safeguarding concerns.

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- Educational Psychologists for tailored support.
- Early Help Services for family-based intervention.
- Lead multi-agency meetings to ensure joined-up support for the child.
- Ensure a safeguarding action plan is in place alongside the support plan.

#### 4. GDPR & Confidentiality in Reporting

- Mental health data is special category data under GDPR, requiring secure handling.
- Confidentiality must be upheld while ensuring relevant staff have access to necessary information.

#### Senior Leadership's Role in Data Handling:

- Ensure secure storage of reports using systems like CPOMS or Concerns.
- Share information on a need-to-know basis, ensuring compliance with GDPR.
- Gain parental consent for referrals unless safeguarding concerns override this requirement.
- Ensure staff training on handling mental health disclosures appropriately (part of safeguarding induction).

#### 5. Creating & Implementing a Support Plan

A Support Plan is essential for ensuring the child receives appropriate, coordinated, and sustained support within the school environment.

#### Senior Leadership's Role in Support Plan Creation:

##### 1. Gather Information & Assess Needs:

- Collaborate with teachers, SENCO, pastoral staff, and external specialists.
- Identify triggers, barriers to learning, and necessary adjustments.

##### 2. Develop the Support Plan:

- Outline specific interventions, e.g.:
- Regular pastoral check-ins
- Access to school counselling or external therapy
- Adjustments to workload/timetable
- Assign named staff members responsible for implementation.
- Include communication strategies for parental and multi-agency involvement.

##### 3. Monitor & Review Progress:

- Set regular review meetings with all stakeholders.
- Modify the plan as needed based on the child's progress and feedback.
- Ensure the child is actively involved in reviewing their own plan.

#### Summary of Senior Leadership's Responsibilities in Reporting & Support

- Ensure mental health concerns are reported and acted upon in a timely manner.
- Prevent exclusion by implementing reasonable adjustments to support the child's continued education.
- Escalate cases appropriately to CAMHS, social services, or educational psychologists when needed.
- Ensure GDPR compliance and confidentiality in mental health reporting.
- Lead the creation and review of a structured Support Plan to provide tailored assistance.
- Monitor effectiveness and advocate for child-centred interventions that prioritize well-being over disciplinary action.

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