

# EquiScholars HQ Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy



## Review

Review Cycle	Date of Current Policy	Author(s) of Current Policy	Review Date
Annual	June 2024	K. Blackmore	June 2025

## Ratification

Role	Name	Signature	Date
Director	Kate Blackmore		10.06.2024
Head of Therapeutic Interventions*	Claire Cottrell		10.06.2024
Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)*	Claire Cottrell		04.09.2023
Deputy DSL (s)*	Kate Blackmore		

*\*Any changes to key personnel/holiday/emergency contacts will be shared with the appropriate agencies.*

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## 1.1 Definitions

**Safeguarding** is defined as:

- Protecting children from maltreatment.
- Preventing impairment of children's mental and physical health or development.
- Ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care.
- And taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

**Child Protection** is defined in the Children Act 1989 (s.47) as when a child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm. Under statutory guidance and legislation action must be taken to safeguard and promote the child's welfare.

## 1.2 Introduction

At **EquiScholars HQ**

- Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is **everyone's** responsibility. **Everyone** who encounters children, their families, and carers, has a role to play.
- In order to fulfil this responsibility effectively, all professionals should make sure their approach is child centred. This means that they should always consider what is in the **best interests** of the child.
- We take an '**it can happen here**' approach where safeguarding is concerned.
- **Everyone** who encounters children has a role to play in identifying concerns, sharing information, and taking prompt action.
- Victims of harm should **never** be given the impression that they are creating a problem by reporting abuse, sexual violence, or sexual harassment. Nor should a victim ever be made to feel ashamed for making a report.

**EquiScholars HQ** is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children by:

- The provision of a safe environment in which children and young people can learn.
- Acting on concerns about a child's welfare immediately.
- Fulfilling our legal responsibilities to identify children who may need early help or who are suffering, or are likely to suffer, significant harm.

All action taken by **EquiScholars HQ** will be in accordance with current legislation and guidance. The following safeguarding legislation and guidance has been considered when drafting this policy:

- [Education Act 2002 Section 175 \(maintained schools only\)](#)

- [Education Act 2002 Section 157 \(Independent schools incl Academies and CTC's\)](#)
- [The Education \(Independent School Standards\) \(England\) Regulations 2003](#)
- [The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006](#)
- [Teachers' Standards \(Guidance for school leaders, school staff and governing bodies\)](#)
- [Working Together to Safeguarding Children](#)
- [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)
- [Information Sharing 2018](#)
- [What to do if you're worried a child is being abused](#)
- [Filtering and monitoring standards in schools and colleges \(DfE\)](#)
- Local Guidance from the Local Safeguarding Children Partnership: [Policies and Procedures - Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership](#)

**This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies:**

- Recruitment and Selection
- How to report Low Level Concerns
- Whistleblowing and Public Interest Disclosure
- Code of Conduct for Staff/ Staff Behaviour Policy
- Behaviour (which should include measures to prevent child on child bullying, harmful sexual behaviour including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying, and Exclusions Policy of a separate document)
- E-Safety
- Self-Harm
- Policy on Supporting Children in Care
- Attendance (including the safeguarding response to children who are absent or are missing from education)
- Health and Safety

Directors should ensure that the above policies and procedures, adopted by governing bodies and proprietors, are accessible, understood and followed by all staff.

### 1.3 Equalities Statement

With regards to safeguarding we will consider our duties under the [Equality Act 2010](#) and our general and specific duties under the [Public Sector Equality Duty](#). General duties include:

1. Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010.

2. Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.
3. Foster good relations across all protected characteristics between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

Details of our specific duties are published under **EquiScholars HQ's** equality statement and measurable objectives. **These are available on request.**

We adhere to Somerset Children and Young Peoples plan 2022-2024

[Somerset Children and Young Peoples Plan 2022 - 2024 - Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership](#)

Staff are aware of the additional barriers to recognising abuse and neglect in children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). This will be in line with our Special Educational Needs and Disability Policy (**This is available on request**)

**EquiScholars HQ** also adheres to the principals of and promotes anti-oppressive practice in line of the [United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child](#) and the [Human Rights Act 1998](#).

## 1.4 Overall Aims

This policy will contribute to the safeguarding of children at **EquiScholars HQ** by:

- Clarifying safeguarding expectations for members of the education setting's community, staff, governing body, learners, and their families.
- Contributing to the establishment of a safe, resilient, and robust safeguarding culture in the setting built on shared values; and that our learners are treated with respect and dignity, taught to treat each other and staff with respect, feel safe, have a voice, and are listened to.
- Supporting contextual safeguarding practice recognising that the setting's site can be a location where harm can occur.
- Setting expectations for developing knowledge and skills within the setting's community (staff, learners, parents/carers) to the signs and indicators of safeguarding issues and how to respond to them.
- Early identification of need for vulnerable learners and provision of proportionate interventions to promote their welfare and safety.
- Working in partnership with learners, parents, and other agencies in the Local Safeguarding Partnership including Early Help.

**EquiScholars HQ** is named as a relevant agency in the Local Safeguarding Partnership (Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership). This policy sets out its statutory duty to co-operate, follow and comply with published arrangements as set out by the Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership's professional expectations, roles, and responsibilities.

## 1.5 Professional expectations, roles and responsibilities.

### 1.5.1 Role of all staff

- All staff will read and understand Part 1 of statutory guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education (2023). Those working directly with children will also read Annex B.
- In addition to this all staff will be aware of the systems in place which support safeguarding including reading this Safeguarding/Child Protection Policy; the Behaviour Policy; the Staff Behaviour Policy (code of conduct); safeguarding response to children who go missing or are absent from education; and the role of the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).
- Know who and how to contact the DSL and any deputies or the Directors.
- All staff will be able to identify vulnerable learners and take action to keep them safe. Information or concerns about learners will be shared with the DSL where it includes those:
  - who may need a social worker and may be experiencing abuse or neglect.
  - requiring mental health support.
  - may benefit from early help.
  - where there is a radicalisation concern.
  - where a crime may have been committed.
- Be clear as to the setting's policy and procedures about [child on child abuse](#), children missing or absent from education and [those requiring mental health support](#), and the [impact of technology in relation to online safety](#) including online filtering and monitoring processes.
- Be involved where appropriate, in the implementation of individual plans to further safeguard vulnerable learners and understand their academic progress and attainment and maintain a culture of high aspirations for this cohort.
- Record concerns appropriately and in a timely manner by using the setting's safeguarding systems.
- To be aware of the need to raise to the senior leadership team any concerns they have about safeguarding practices within the school.

### 1.5.2 - Role of the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and Deputies (DDSL)

Duties are further outlined in Keeping Children Safe in Education (2023, Part 2)

Details of our DSL and Deputy DSL are available on the **EquiScholars HQ** website, the notice board in reception and on posters throughout the school.

- The DSL is a senior member of staff who undertakes lead responsibility for safeguarding and child protection within the setting.
- The DSL has undertaken the **SSCP** training to ensure they are compliant with the Local Authority requirement for DSLs.
- The DSL works with the headteacher, and relevant strategic leads, taking lead responsibility for promoting educational outcomes by knowing the welfare, safeguarding and child protection issues that learners in need are experiencing or have experienced, and identifying the impact that these issues might be having on learner's attendance, engagement and achievement at school or college.
- Activities include the management of work undertaken by any Deputy DSLs.
- Manages early identification of vulnerability of learners and their families from staff through cause for concerns or notifications. This will ensure detailed, accurate, secure written records of concerns and referrals.
- Manages referrals to local safeguarding partners where learners with additional needs have been identified. These can include those –
  - who need a social worker and may be experiencing abuse or neglect.
  - requiring mental health support.
  - who may benefit from early help.
  - where there is a radicalisation concern.
  - where a crime may have been committed.

**The DSL will also:**

- Work with others – acting as a point of contact for outside agencies about safeguarding.
- Support and advise other staff in making referrals to other agencies.
- When required, liaise with the case manager and the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) in relation to child protection cases which concern a staff member.
- Coordinate safeguarding training and raise awareness and understanding to the school community around policies and practice in relation to safeguarding.
- Help promote educational outcomes by sharing information about vulnerable learners with relevant staff. This includes ensuring that staff:
  - know who these children are,
  - understand their academic progress and attainment and maintain a culture of high aspirations for this cohort.
  - Are supported to identify the challenges that children in this group might face.

- Provide additional academic support or make reasonable adjustments to help children who have **or have had** a social worker to reach their potential.
- Ensure the successful transfer of the Safeguarding/Child Protection File when a learner moves on to a new setting within 5 days for in year transfer or the first 5 days of the start of a new term.
- Ensure appropriate safeguarding cover and availability during term time/ any out of hours/out of term activities managed by the school.
- Take lead responsibility for understanding the filtering and monitoring systems and processes in place.

### **1.5.3 - Role of the Directors –**

Duties are further outlined in Keeping Children Safe in Education (2022, Part 2)

There is a senior level lead who takes responsibility for the setting's safeguarding responsibility to ensure that safeguarding and child protection practice, process, and policy (including online safety) is effective and is compliant with legislation, statutory guidance, and Local Safeguarding Partnership arrangements.

- The appointed Safeguarding director will liaise with the Head of Centres and the DSL to produce an annual report and complete the S. 175/S. 157 (annual safeguarding) audit for the Somerset Education Safeguarding Leads.
- Ensure that the school remedies any deficiencies or weaknesses brought to its attention without delay.
- Ensure that this document is updated annually (or when there are significant updates)
- Ensure that the DSL is an appropriate senior member of setting's senior leadership team and ensure that they have adequate time, funding, training, resources, and support to carry out their role effectively.
- Ensure that they attend Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership training and that safeguarding learning for the school community is robust and effective.
- Ensure that learners are taught about safeguarding on the curriculum including online safety in compliance with statutory guidance [Relationships and sex education \(RSE\) and health education - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/relationships-and-sex-education-rse-and-health-education).
- To ensure that teachers, including supply teachers, other staff, volunteers, and contractors have appropriate checks carried out in line with statutory guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education (2023, Part 3).
- Ensure that there are procedures in place to manage safeguarding concerns or allegations against teachers, including supply teachers, other staff, volunteers, and



contractors who may not be suitable to work with or pose a risk to learners, this includes having a process to manage low level concerns.

- Ensure that systems are in place for learners to effectively share a concern about a safeguarding issue they are experiencing, express their views and give feedback.
- Ensure that the setting has systems in place to prevent, identify and respond to child on child harm (including sexual abuse and sexual harassment) and mental health concerns, and review the effectiveness of the setting's online safety practices.
- Appoint a designated teacher to promote the educational achievement for children in care and other care arrangements.
- Whilst considering their responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and provide them with a safe environment in which to learn, governing bodies and proprietors will be doing all that they reasonably can to limit children's exposure to the above risks from the school's or college's IT system. As part of this process, governing bodies and proprietors will ensure their school or college has appropriate filters and monitoring systems in place and regularly review their effectiveness. They should ensure that the leadership team and relevant staff have an awareness and understanding of the provisions in place and manage them effectively and know how to escalate concerns when identified. Governing bodies and proprietors will consider the age range of their children, the number of children, how often they access the IT system and the proportionality of costs verses safeguarding risks.

## 1.6 Safeguarding training for staff

### 1.6.1 - All staff:

- Directors will ensure that all staff members undergo the Somerset Safeguarding Child Partnership (SSCP) safeguarding and child protection (including online safety) training at induction.
- Will receive appropriate safeguarding and child protection (including online safety) refresher training at least annually (via formal training, email e-bulletins and staff meetings).
- All staff must complete FGM awareness training and will understand their legal duty under the Mandatory Reporting Duty.
- All staff must complete PREVENT awareness training. This is to ensure that they can comply with the legal expectations under the PREVENT duty.
- Staff training includes clear reference to internal whistleblowing policy and guidance for escalating concerns.
- All staff should receive training on the expectations, applicable roles and responsibilities in relation to filtering and monitoring.

### 1.6.2 - Designated Safeguarding Lead and deputies:

- Will undergo formal training provided by the Somerset Safeguarding Children's Partnership (SSCP) to provide them with the knowledge and skills (including online safety) training required to carry out the role. The training will be updated every two years.
- Deputies will be trained to the same level as the DSL.
- The DSL and any deputies will liaise with the SSCP and Somerset Education Safeguarding Service to ensure that their knowledge and skills are updated via e-bulletins, attend DSL network meetings, and take time to read and digest safeguarding bulletins.

### **1.6.3 - Other training considerations:**

- The directors will ensure that at least one person on any appointment panel will have undertaken safer recruitment training, in line School Staffing (England) Regulations 2009.
- Members of the senior leadership team will make themselves aware of and understand their role within the local safeguarding arrangements. This will ensure that those who have responsibility for the management of behaviour, inclusion, Special Educational Needs, attendance, and exclusions will carry out their duties with a safeguarding consideration.
- The Designated Teacher for Children in Care will undergo appropriate training to fulfil their role to promote the educational achievement of registered pupils who are in care.
- The mental health lead has access to appropriate training.
- Training around safeguarding topics in Annex B (including online safety and filtering and monitoring) will be integrated, aligned, and considered as part of a whole school safeguarding approach.
- Appropriate colleagues have received appropriate training in relation to use of reasonable force and positive handling.
- Governors and trustees receive appropriate safeguarding and child protection at induction

## **1.7 Safeguarding in the curriculum**

**EquiScholars HQ** is dedicated to ensuring that learners are taught about safeguarding, including online safety. We recognise that a one size fits all approach may not be appropriate for all learners, and a more personalised or contextualised approach for more vulnerable learners, victims of abuse and some SEND children might be needed. This is part of a broad and balanced curriculum. This includes:

- Working within statutory guidance in respect to [Relationships and sex education \(RSE\) and health education - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/relationships-and-sex-education-rse-and-health-education);
- Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) education, to explore key areas such as self-esteem, emotional literacy, assertiveness, power, building resilience to radicalisation, e-safety and bullying.
- Appropriate filters and monitoring systems are in place to ensure that 'over- blocking' does not lead to unreasonable restrictions as to what learners can be taught about online teaching and safeguarding.
- The curriculum will be shaped to respond to safeguarding incident patterns in the setting identified by the Designated Safeguarding Lead and safeguarding team (e.g., to respond to an increase in bullying incidents).
- Providing engagement opportunities with parents and carers to consult on key aspects of the curriculum.
- Learners can inform the curriculum via discussions with all staff.

## 1.8 Safer recruitment and safer working practice

### 1.8.1 - Safer recruitment

**EquiScholars HQ** pays full regard to the safer recruitment practices detailed in 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' (2023)

- This includes scrutinising applicants, verifying identity and academic or vocational qualifications, obtaining professional and character references, checking previous employment history, and ensuring that a candidate has the health and physical capacity for the job. References are always obtained, scrutinised and concerns resolved satisfactorily before appointment is confirmed.
- It also includes undertaking appropriate checks through the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS), the barred list checks and prohibition checks (and overseas checks if appropriate), dependent on the role and duties performed, including regulated and non-regulated activity.
- Applicants must provide an application form and Curriculum Vitae will not be accepted as a stand-alone.
- As a setting we will conduct online searches as part of our due diligence checks on short listed candidates and inform them of this.
- All recruitment materials will include reference to **EquiScholars HQ's** commitment to safeguarding and promoting the wellbeing of learners.

### 1.8.2 - Use of reasonable force

'Reasonable force' refers to the physical contact to restrain and control children using no more force than is needed.' The use of reasonable force is down to the professional judgement of the staff member concerned and will be determined by individual circumstances and the vulnerability of any child with Special Educational Needs or Disability (SEND) will be considered.

- The use of reasonable force will be minimised through positive and proactive behaviour support and de-escalation and will follow government guidance ([Use of Reasonable Force in Schools 2013](#); [Reducing the need for restraint and restrictive intervention, 2019](#)).
- There is robust recording of any incident where positive handling or restraint has been used. Further review of the incident is carried out to reflect on how the incident could be avoided, this will involve the child and their family.

The process around how the setting manages concerns where a professional may pose a risk to learners and our response to low level concerns can be accessed in section [2.8 Allegations of abuse made against professionals](#).

### **1.8.3 - Whistleblowing procedures**

Staff are aware of the following whistleblowing channels for situations where they feel unable to raise an issue with the senior leadership team or feel that their genuine concerns are not being addressed:

- General guidance can be found at: Advice on whistleblowing <https://www.gov.uk/whistleblowing>.
- The NSPCC whistleblowing helpline is available [here](#) for staff who do not feel able to raise concerns regarding child protection failures internally. Staff can call: 0800 028 0285 – line is available from 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM, Monday to Friday and Email: [help@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:help@nspcc.org.uk).
- The above channels are clearly accessible to all staff (in the staff handbook, code of conduct and staff notice boards).
- Whistleblowing policy is available on request.

## **1.9 Key safeguarding areas**

These topics are themes that can impact on children and families, there are specific areas of safeguarding that the setting has statutory responsibilities to address which are hyperlinked:

- Children in the court system
- Children affected by parental offending/imprisonment.
- [Children missing or absent from education](#) – including persistent absence.
- [Child Exploitation](#) (including both Child Sexual Exploitation and Child Criminal Exploitation and county lines, modern day slavery and trafficking)

- Cybercrime
- [Domestic Abuse](#)
- Homelessness
- So-called Honour based Abuse (including Female Genital Mutilation and Forced Marriage),
- [Online Safety](#)
- [Mental health](#)
- [Child on child abuse:](#)
  - Bullying (including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying).
  - Abuse in intimate personal relationships between peers.
  - Physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm (this may include an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages physical abuse).
  - Sexual violence, such as rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault;(this may include an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages sexual violence).
  - Sexual harassment, such as sexual comments, remarks, jokes and online sexual harassment, which may be standalone or part of a broader pattern of abuse.
  - Causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent, such as forcing someone to strip, touch themselves sexually, or to engage in sexual activity with a third party.
  - Consensual and non-consensual sharing of nudes and semi-nude images and or videos (also known as sexting or youth produced sexual imagery).
  - Upskirting, which typically involves taking a picture under a person's clothing without their permission, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress, or alarm; and
  - Initiation/hazing type violence and rituals (this could include activities involving harassment, abuse or humiliation used as a way of initiating a person into a group and may also include an online element).
- [Preventing Radicalisation \(The Prevent Duty\)](#)
- [Serious Youth Violence](#)
- Substance Misuse
- [Private Fostering](#)
- [Young Carers](#)

Additional information about key safeguarding areas can also be found in Keeping Children Safe in Education (2023; Annex B); the [NSPCC website - Types of Abuse](#). Localised resources for education settings can be accessed through Somerset Safeguarding Children's Partnership

PART 2: Procedures

## 2.1 Reporting concerns

All staff are clear about recording and reporting concerns to the DSL/DSL deputies in a timely way. In the case a learner is in immediate danger, staff should phone the police.

All staff are aware of and follow the procedures to respond to a concern about a child detailed in [Appendix A](#). This includes responses to child-on-child harm and learners who present with a mental health need ([Appendix B](#)).

At **EquiScholars HQ** learners can raise their concerns via conversations with any staff member at any time. This is promoted through close relationships in which learners are informed of how to raise concerns. Staff members will report all concerns via SENAP and they will be treated seriously.

## 2.2 Information Sharing

**EquiScholars HQ** is committed to have due regard to relevant data protection principles which allow for sharing (and withholding) personal information as provided for in the Data protection Act 2018 and UK General Data Protection Regulations. This includes how to store and share information for safeguarding purposes, including information which is sensitive and personal and should be treated as 'special category personal data'.

Staff at the setting are aware that:

- 'Safeguarding' and 'individuals at risk' is a processing condition that allows practitioners to share special category personal data.
- Practitioners will seek consent to share data where possible in line with [Information Sharing for Safeguarding Practitioners 2018](#).

There may be times when it is necessary to share information without consent such as:

- To gain consent would place the child at risk,
- by doing so will compromise a criminal investigation,
- It cannot be reasonably expected that a practitioner gains consent,
- or, if by sharing information it will enhance the safeguarding of a child in a timely manner, but it is not possible to gain consent.

There are also times when **EquiScholars HQ** will not provide pupil's personal data where the serious harm test under legislation is met, (by sharing the information the child may be at further risk). When in doubt **EquiScholars HQ** will seek legal advice. **The Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR do not prevent the sharing of information for the purposes of keeping children safe. Fears about sharing information must not be allowed to stand in the way of the need to safeguard and promote the welfare and protect the safety of children.**

## 2.3 Identifying and monitoring the needs of vulnerable learners.

The DSL and Deputy DSL will regularly review and monitor those students who have been identified as vulnerable. This can include reviewing attendance data, behaviour data, attainment data and safeguarding records. This is to ensure that:

- Proportionate and early interventions can be taken to promote the safety and welfare of the child and prevent escalation of harm.
- Information about vulnerable learners is shared with teachers and school and college leadership staff to promote educational outcomes.
- Learners who currently have, or have had, a social worker will have their academic progress and attainment reviewed and additional academic support will be provided to help them reach their full potential.
- Reasonable adjustments are made in relation to school-based interventions – for example responding to behaviour.

## 2.4 Multi-agency working

**EquiScholars HQ** will work together with appropriate agencies to safeguard and promote the welfare of children including identifying and responding to their needs. This is in compliance with statutory guidance [Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018](#).

Occasions that warrant a statutory assessment under the Children Act 1989:

- If the child is in need under s.17 of the Children Act 1989 (including when a child is a young carer and or subject to a private fostering arrangement).
- Or if the child needs protection under s.47 of the Children Act 1989 where they are experiencing significant harm, or likely to experience significant harm.

Referrals in these cases should be made by the DSL (or Deputy DSLs) to Children's Social Care in the Local Authority in which that child resides.

Where the child already has a social worker, the request for service should go immediately to the social worker involved or, in their absence, to their team manager.

If the child is a child in care, notification should also be made to Somerset's Virtual School.

**EquiScholars HQ** will co-operate with any statutory safeguarding assessments conducted by children's social care: this includes ensuring representation at appropriate inter-agency meetings such as integrated support plan meetings initial and review child protection conferences and core group meetings.

#### **2.4.1 Additional considerations:**

- Where a learner and/or their family is subject to an inter-agency child protection plan or a multiagency risk assessment conference (MARAC) meeting, the setting will contribute to the preparation, implementation, and review of the plan as appropriate.
- In situations where a child in care may be put on to part time timetable, the school will consult with relevant agencies and the virtual school.
- If a crime has been suspected or committed that involved the bringing of an offensive weapon on to the school site, the setting will liaise with the Police who will consider a proportionate response.
- If there is a risk of harm, the police should be called via 999. For other concerns of criminality, the non-statutory guidance 'When to Call the Police' from the NCPCC can be helpful or contact the local PCSO/School Police Beat Officer/School Officer.
- In the rare event that a child death occurs, or a child is seriously harmed, **EquiScholars HQ** will notify the Somerset Safeguarding Children's Partnership as soon as is reasonably possible.

## **2.5 Suspensions, permanent exclusions, and commissioning of Alternative Provisions.**

(To be read in conjunction with the Behaviour Policy.)

When the setting is considering suspending or permanently excluding a learner where additional vulnerability is identified it is important that the learner's welfare is a paramount consideration. The Director will consider their legal duty of care when sending a learner home.

**EquiScholars HQ** will exercise their legal duties in relation to their interventions. This includes:

- whether a statutory assessment should be considered in line with the principles of Children Act 1989,



- that decisions are made in an anti-discriminatory manner in line with the [Equality Act 2010](#) (including having regard to the [SEND Code of Practice](#))
- and takes into consideration the learner's rights under the [Human Rights Act 1998](#).
- Interventions will be consistent with statutory guidance [School suspensions and permanent exclusions - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

### 2.5.1 - Actions to take

- An assessment of need should be undertaken with multi-agency partners with a view to mitigate any identified risk of harm this in line with [2.3 Identifying and monitoring the needs of vulnerable learners](#).
- If the child is subject to a child protection plan or where there is an existing child protection file, we will call a multiagency risk-assessment meeting prior to making the decision to exclude.
- In the event of a one-off serious incident resulting in an immediate decision to exclude, the risk assessment *must* be completed prior to convening a meeting of the governing body.

### 2.5.2 - Commissioning Alternative Provisions

When commissioning Alternative Provision **EquiScholars HQ**, will have regard to statutory guidance:

[Alternative provision - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

[Education for children with health needs who cannot attend school - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

We will ensure there is a clear agreement of roles and responsibilities to maintain safeguarding and daily monitoring of attendance arrangements for learners who are not taught on site.

**EquiScholars HQ** will continue to be responsible for the safeguarding of that learner and will make necessary checks on the provider to meet the needs of the learner. Written confirmation from the Alternative provider will be obtained of the checks on staff that we would otherwise perform for our own staff.

## 2.6 Children Missing or Absent from Education

(To be read in conjunction with the Attendance Policy.)

A learner missing or absent from education is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect, or maybe an indicator of need for early help support. Staff should follow procedures for unauthorised absence and for dealing with children that go missing or are absent from education, particularly on repeat occasions. These should be reported to the DSL and reviewed in line with [2.3 Identifying and monitoring the needs of vulnerable learners](#).

**EquiScholars HQ** will follow the guidance detailed in [Children Missing Education \(2016\)](#) and Somerset Education Engagement Policy for Children Missing Education.

This will include notifying the local authority in which the child lives:

- of any pupil who fails to attend school regularly,
- or has been absent without the school's permission for a continuous period of 10 school days or more, at such intervals as are agreed between the school and the local authority.

### **2.6.1 - Elective Home Education**

**EquiScholars HQ** will notify the Local Authority of every learner where a parent has exercised their right to educate their child at home. Safeguarding concerns should be shared with the Education Engagement Service (EES) and consideration of whether additional support from children's services should be made in line with the Children Act 1989.

## **2.7 Responding to incidents of child-on-child abuse/harm.**

(There is flow diagram in [Appendix B](#) that illustrates this section)

All staff should recognise that children can abuse their peers (including online). It is important that incidents of abuse and harm are treated under safeguarding policy in conjunction with the behaviour policy. However, concerns regarding the welfare of learners requires process and records to be kept on the child's safeguarding/child protection file.

Further examples of child-on-child harm this can be found under section [1.9 Key Safeguarding Areas](#). It is recognised that peer on peer abuse can happen inside and outside of school/college or online.

### **At EquiScholars HQ**

- We have a 'zero tolerance' approach to abuse. Incidents are taken seriously. These will never be tolerated or passed off as 'banter,' just having a laugh' or 'part of growing up.' Banter and teasing can and should be acknowledged and recognised as bullying behaviour and may require proportionate intervention.
- Even with a zero-tolerance approach, we take steps to educate and take action ensure to mitigate the risk of contributing to a culture of unacceptable behaviours or a culture that normalises abuse.
- It is understood that child on child harm may reflect equality issues in terms of those who may be targeted are more likely to have protected characteristics.
- Early identification of vulnerability to child-on-child harm is made by reviewing attendance, behaviour, attainment, and safeguarding records at least on a termly basis.

There are clear systems in place (which are well promoted, easily understood and easily accessible) for learners to confidently report abuse knowing their concerns will be treated easily as reflected in section [2.1 Reporting a concern](#) of this policy.

**Equischolars HQ** will handle initial reports of harm by:

- Securing the immediate safety of learners involved in an incident and sourcing support for other young people affected.
- Listening carefully to the child, being non-judgmental, being clear about boundaries and how the report will be progressed, not asking leading questions and only prompting the child where necessary with open questions – where, when, what, etc.
- ensuring that victims will never be given the impression that they are creating a problem by reporting abuse, sexual violence, or sexual harassment. They will never be made to feel ashamed for making a report.
- Ensuring the child's wishes are taken into consideration in any intervention and any action is taken to ensure safety of the target and other members of the wider peer cohort.
- Not promising confidentiality as it is highly likely that information will need to be shared with others.

### **2.7.1 Actions to take in relation to sexual violence and sexual harassment.**

Reference to Keeping Children Safe in Education (2023) guidance should be made in relation to taking protective action. **EquiScholars HQ** will take the following actions when responding to incidents of sexual violence and sexual harassment:

- Incidents will be reported immediately to the DSL/ Deputy DSL who will undertake further assessment of what action should be taken proportionate to the factors that have been identified. [The Brook - Sexual Behaviours Traffic Light Assessment Tool](#) should be utilised to inform assessment of risk and what actions to subsequently take. This may include seeking specialist advice and guidance from the education psychology team, the DSL Consultation Line or the Education Safeguarding Leads.
- Support and undertake GIFT work as an early intervention when requested.
- DSLs/Deputies will take **proportionate** action and consider whether a case can be managed internally, through early help, or should involve other agencies as required in line with the section [2.4 - Multi-Agency Working section](#).
- When an incident involves an act of **sexual violence** (rape, assault by penetration, or sexual assault) the starting point is that this should be passed on to police **regardless** of the age of criminal responsibility (10 years old).

This must be reported directly via 101 for recording purposes and accountability. A concurrent referral to social care must also be made.

- When the children involved require a statutory assessment either under s.17 or s. 47 of the Children Act 1989 a referral to social care should be undertaken.
- Where the report includes an online element, the setting will follow [Searching, screening and confiscation at school - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/searching-screening-and-confiscation-at-school) and [Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/sharing-nudes-and-semi-nudes-advice-for-education-settings-working-with-children-and-young-people). The key consideration is for staff not to view or forward illegal images of a child. The highlighted advice provides more details on what to do when viewing an image is unavoidable.
- Risk assessments and or safety plans will be developed for individual children who have been involved in an incident. This should be reviewed regularly or every time there is an occurrence of an incident. These should involve the child and parents/carers and address contextual risks.
- It is important that schools and colleges consider sexual harassment in broad terms. Sexual harassment (as set out above) creates a culture that, if not challenged, can normalise inappropriate behaviours and provide an environment that may lead to sexual violence.

### **2.7.2 - Contextual safeguarding approach to child-on-child harm:**

**EquiScholars HQ** will minimise the risk of child-on-child abuse by taking a contextual approach to safeguarding by increasing safety in the contexts of which harm can occur – this can include the school environment itself, peer groups and the neighbourhood.

Following any incidents of child-on-child harm, the DSL/Deputies will review and consider whether any practice or environmental changes can be made in relation to any lessons learned. This can include making changes to staffing and supervision, making changes to the physical environment and considering the utilisation and delivery of safeguarding topics in the curriculum.

## **2.8 Responding to allegations of abuse made against adults working in the setting.**

Staff must report any concerns or allegations about a professional's behaviour (including supply staff, volunteers, and contractors and those from organisations or individuals using the school premises) where they may have:

- behaved in a way that has harmed a child or may have harmed a child.
- possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child.
- behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates he or she may pose a risk of harm to children; or

- behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children.

### **2.8.1 - Immediate action must be taken:**

- Do not speak to the individual it concerns.
- Allegations or concerns about colleagues and visitors must be reported directly to the Director who will follow guidance in Keeping Children Safe in Education (2023, Part four: Allegations of abuse made against teachers and other staff).
- If the concern relates to Head Teacher/Principal it should be reported to the Chair of Governors, who will liaise with the [Local Authority Designated Officer \(LADO\)](#) and they will decide on any action required.
- If there is a conflict of interest which inhibits this process of reporting, staff can report directly to the LADO.
- If allegations are regarding a member of supply staff, the school will take the lead and progress enquiries with the LADO, whilst continuing to engage and work with the employment agency.
- If concerns relate to the Directors, allegations should be referred to the LADO.
- Allegations regarding foster carers or anyone in a position of trust working or volunteering with children should be referred to the LADO on the day that the allegation is reported. The allocated social worker should also be informed on the day. The school should not undertake any investigation unless the LADO advises this.

### **2.8.2 - Low level concerns**

This should be read in conjunction with the staff code of conduct and Keeping children Safe in Education (2023). A low-level concern is not insignificant. This process should be used in events where a concern about professional conduct does not meet the threshold set out at the beginning of this section.

The setting provides a clear procedure for sharing low level concerns. These will be shared with the DSL.

- Reports should be made to the DSL/Deputy DSL (or the Directors if it is regarding the DSL). **EquiScholars HQ** creates an environment where staff are encouraged and feel confident to self-refer where they have found themselves in a situation.
- The DSL will address unprofessional behaviour and support the individual to correct it at an early stage providing a responsive, sensitive, and proportionate handling of such concerns when they are raised.

- Review and correct any deficits in the setting's safeguarding system.
- Best practice to have separate policy for Low Level Concerns.

## 2.9 Mental health and wellbeing.

(A flow diagram is available in [Appendix B](#) to illustrate this section)

Schools and colleges have an important role to play in supporting the mental health and wellbeing of their learners. Mental health problems can, in some cases, be an indicator that a child has suffered or is at risk of suffering abuse, neglect or exploitation, and or may require early help support.

**EquiScholars HQ** will commit to undertake the following.

- Early identification of vulnerability to mental health problems by reviewing attendance, behaviour, attainment, and safeguarding records at least on a termly basis.
- Ensure that learners can report and share concerns in line with section [2.1 Reporting a concern](#) of this policy.
- Staff will follow a safeguarding process in terms of reporting concerns outlined in [Appendix B](#) so the DSL/Deputy DSLs (and wider members of the safeguarding team such as the SENDCo) can assess whether there are any other vulnerabilities can be identified and proportionate support considered.
- Staff will ensure the immediate health and safety of a learner who is displaying acute mental health distress. This may require support from emergency services via 999 if the learner is at risk of immediate harm.
- DSLs/Deputies will consider whether a case can be managed internally, through early help, or should involve other agencies as required in line with section [2.4 - Multi-Agency Working](#).
- The setting will communicate and work with the learner and parents/carers to ensure that interventions are in the best interests of the child.
- DSLs will liaise with staff to ensure reasonable adjustments are made and develop ways to support achieving positive educational outcomes.
- Only appropriately trained professionals should attempt to make a diagnosis of a mental health problem – DSLs and the senior leadership team should be able to access specialist advice through targeted services.

### 2.9.1 - Contextual safeguarding approach to mental health

**EquiScholars HQ** will ensure that preventative measures in terms of providing safeguarding on the curriculum will provide opportunities for learners to identify when they may need help, and to develop resilience.

The setting will take a 'whole school approach' to:

- deliver high quality teaching around mental health and wellbeing on the curriculum.
- having a culture that promotes mental health and wellbeing;
- having an environment that promotes mental health and wellbeing;
- making sure pupils and staff are aware of and able to access a range of mental health services;
- supporting staff wellbeing
- And being committed to pupil and parent participation

## 2.10 Online Safety

Online safety is an integrated and interwoven theme with other safeguarding considerations. It is essential that the DSL takes a lead on ensuring that interventions are effective. This means coordinating support and engaging with other colleagues in the setting who may have more technological expertise such as the IT manager.

**EquiScholars HQ** is committed to addressing online safety issues around content, contact, conduct and commerce. This includes:

- Ensuring that online safety is concerned in relevant policies and procedures.
- Online safety is interwoven in safeguarding training for staff and safeguarding on the curriculum for learners.
- Acknowledging that child on child abuse can happen via mobile and smart technology between individuals and groups. This should be approached in the same process outlined in section [2.7 Responding to incidents of child on child harm](#).
- Provision of education via remote learning will comply with governmental advice [Safeguarding and remote education - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- The effectiveness of the setting's ability to safeguarding learners in respect to filtering and monitoring, information security and access management alongside the above will be reviewed annually.
- Preparing children with information for any online challenges and hoaxes, sharing information with parents and where to get help.

## **Summary of changes since September 2022**



**Date****Details**

***Much of the policy content has remained the same as the previous year 2022, the changes below largely reflect the changes to KCSIE 2023.***

## Page 1

- Table now updated to include Deputy DSL and Safeguarding Governor
- "Details of Policy Updates" now moved to back of document titled "Summary of changes since September 2022".

## Page 4

- Updated guidance and legislation
- Added "absent" to attendance bullet point

## Page 5

- updated hyperlink to new 2022-2024 Children and Young Peoples Plan

## Page 6

- 1.5.1 Added "absent" to bullet point 2.
- Added "including online filtering and monitoring processes" to bullet point 5.

07/08/2023

## Page 8

- Added "Take lead responsibility for understanding the filtering and monitoring systems and processes in place" to bullet point 3.

## Page 9

- 1.6.1 Added bullet point "All staff should receive training on the expectations, applicable roles and responsibilities in relation to filtering and monitoring."

## Page 10

- "filtering and monitoring" added to bullet point 5.

## Page 11

- 1.7.1 – bullet point 4, updated to say "inform candidates that online searches will be carried out".

## Page 12

- 1.7.3 Added bullet point to insert hyperlink to own policy.

- 1.9 added "absent" to bullet point 3.

Page 17

- 2.6 added "absent" to title and in paragraph.
- 2.6.1 Service changed to Education Engagement Service (EES).

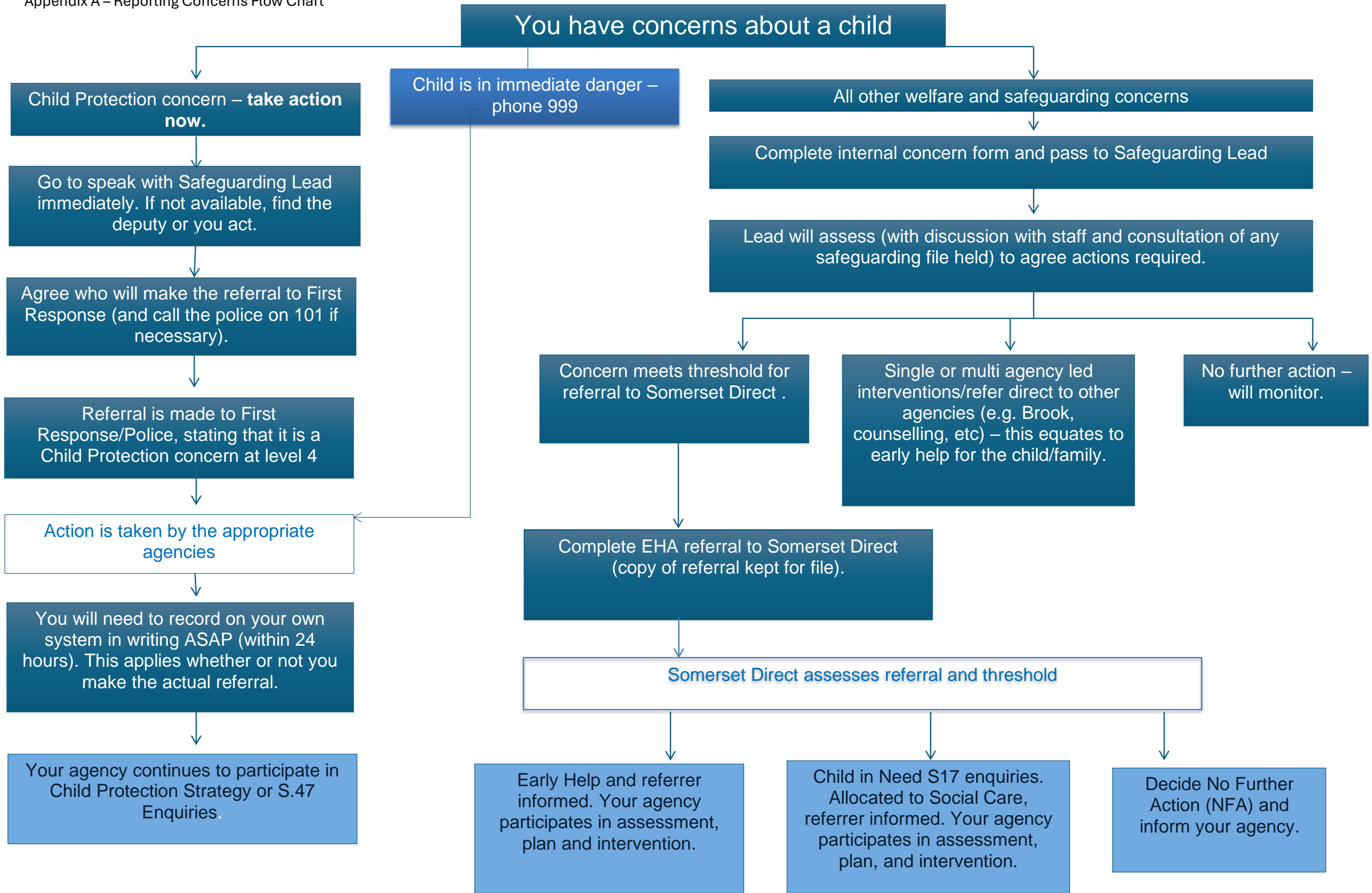
Page 18

- 2.7.1 updated services in bullet point 1.

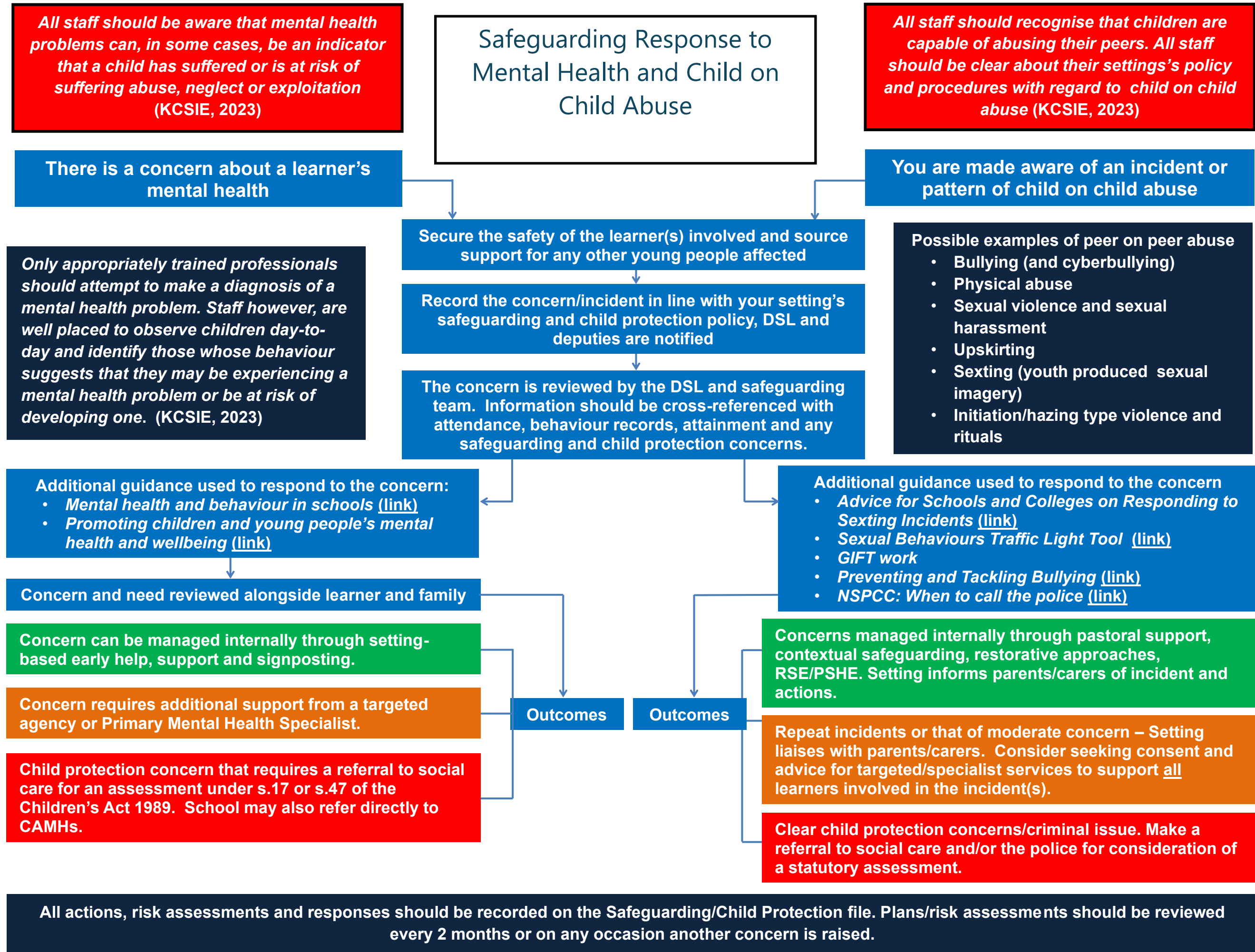
Page 20

- 2.8 Added "those from organisations or individuals using the school premises".
- 2.8.2 Best practice to have separate policy for Low Level Concerns.

Appendix C – Agency information updated.



**No matter what the outcome, keep monitoring, re-refer or escalate as appropriate. Participate in all assessments and plans. Chase referrals if not kept informed – this is our responsibility.**



## Multi-Agency Contacts for Safeguarding in Education.

### If you have concerns about a child/young person in Somerset:

If a child is at immediate risk call the POLICE	<b>POLICE</b> 999
To make an URGENT referral to Children's Social Care	i.e., a child is likely to suffer or is suffering significant harm, call Somerset Direct. <b>Somerset Direct 0300 122 2224</b>
To make a NON-URGENT referral to Children's Social Care.	Complete an Early Help Assessment and send to <b>SD Inputters</b> <b>SDinputters@somerset.gov.uk</b>
To raise concerns and ask for advice about radicalisation (also contact Somerset Direct).	<b>Police Prevent Team</b> - 01278 647466 <a href="mailto:PreventSW@avonandsomerset.police.uk">PreventSW@avonandsomerset.police.uk</a> <b>Local Authority Prevent Lead</b> <a href="mailto:prevent@somerset.gov.uk">prevent@somerset.gov.uk</a>
To liaise with the specialist Safeguarding Police Unit	<b>Lighthouse Safeguarding Unit – Avon and Somerset Police</b> <b>01278 649228</b>
<b>DSL Consultation Line</b> 0300 123 3078	<b>Early Help Hub</b> 01823 3555803
<b>Critical Incident Support</b> EPS 01823 357000	

### If you have concerns about a professional working with a child:

To raise concerns and ask for guidance in relation to the conduct of someone who works with children.	Local Authority Designated Officer - (LADO) Anthony Goble/Stacey Davis <a href="#">Allegations Management - Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership</a>
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### For information, advice, and guidance in relation to safeguarding policy and procedures:

**Education Safeguarding Leads** [Educationsafeguardinglead@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:Educationsafeguardinglead@somerset.gov.uk)

Katherine Hollinghurst (East) [Katherine.hollinghurst@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:Katherine.hollinghurst@somerset.gov.uk)

Beth Ollive (West) [Beth.ollive@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:Beth.ollive@somerset.gov.uk)

### For advice and support in relation to attendance, provision and inclusion:

**Education Engagement Service** [Educationengagementservice@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:Educationengagementservice@somerset.gov.uk)

[www.somerset.gov.uk/ees/resources](http://www.somerset.gov.uk/ees/resources)

Child sexual exploitation & child criminal exploitation

**Operation Topaz (Avon and Somerset Police)**

<https://www.avonandsomerset.police.uk/forms/vul>

Child Missing from Education	<a href="#">Notify us of a Child Missing from Education (CME) - Somerset Council</a>
Children affected by Forced Marriage	<b>Forced Marriage Unit</b> 020 7008 0151 <a href="mailto:fm@fco.gov.uk">fm@fco.gov.uk</a>
Online Safety Advice	<b>Professional Online Safeguarding Helpline</b> T: 0344 381 4772 E: <a href="mailto:helpline@saferinternet.org.uk">helpline@saferinternet.org.uk</a>
Reporting online sexual abuse and grooming	<b>Child Exploitation and Online Protection command</b> <a href="https://www.ceop.police.uk/ceop-reporting/">https://www.ceop.police.uk/ceop-reporting/</a>
FGM advice	<b>NSPCC FGM Helpline</b> 0800 028 3550 <a href="mailto:fgmhelp@nspcc.org.uk">fgmhelp@nspcc.org.uk</a>
Domestic Abuse Helpline	0808 2000 247
Young Carers – advice and support.	0300 123 2224 <a href="mailto:YoungCarersmailbox@somerset.gov.uk">YoungCarersmailbox@somerset.gov.uk</a>
CAMHS	<b>Single Point of Access</b> <a href="#">CAMHS Single Point of Access (SPA) - CAMHS (somersetft.nhs.uk)</a> 0300 1245 012 <a href="mailto:camhsspa@somersetft.nhs.uk">camhsspa@somersetft.nhs.uk</a>
Whistleblowing professional policy	<b>NSPCC Whistleblowing hotline</b> 0800 028 0285 <a href="mailto:help@nspcc.org.uk">help@nspcc.org.uk</a>
Advice around harmful sexualised behaviour.	DSL consultation line 0300 123 3078 <b>Brook Traffic Light Tool</b> <a href="#">Sexual Health &amp; Wellbeing - Brook – Fighting for healthy lives</a>

## Appendix D: Dealing with a disclosure of abuse.

### **When a child tells me about abuse they have suffered, what must I remember?**

- Stay calm.
- Do not communicate shock, anger or embarrassment.
- Reassure the child. Tell them you are pleased that they are speaking to you.
- Never promise confidentiality. Assure them that you will try to help but let the child know that you may have to tell other people in order to do this. State who this will be and why.
- Encourage the child to talk but do not ask "leading questions" or press for information. Use 'Tell Me, Explain to me, Describe to me' (TED) questioning.
- Listen and remember.
- Check that you have understood correctly what the child is trying to tell you.
- Praise the child for telling you. Communicate that they have a right to be safe and protected.
- It is inappropriate to make any comments about the alleged offender.
- Be aware that the child may retract what they have told you. It is essential to record all you have heard.
- At the end of the conversation, tell the child again who you are going to tell and why that person or those people need to know.
- As soon as you can afterwards, make a detailed record of the conversation using the child's own language. Include any questions you may have asked. Do not add any opinions or interpretations.

NB It is not education staff's role to seek disclosures. Their role is to observe that something may be wrong, ask about it, listen, be available and try to make time to talk.

- "The 5 R's" are helpful in understanding what professional's duties are in relation to responding to an incident.

### **Recognise – Respond – Reassure – Refer – Record**

## Appendix E: Types of abuse and neglect

The Department for Education's Tackle Child Abuse campaign has accessible videos to watch <https://tacklechildabuse.campaign.gov.uk/>

Abuse and neglect are defined as the maltreatment of a child or young person whereby someone may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to prevent harm. They may be abused by an adult or adults or by another child or children.

All school and college staff should be aware that abuse, neglect and safeguarding issues are rarely standalone events that can be covered by one definition or label. In most cases multiple issues will overlap with one another. For children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) additional barriers can exist when identifying abuse and neglect, these include:

- assumptions that indicators of possible abuse such as behaviour, mood and injury relate to the child's disability without further exploration.
- being more prone to peer group isolation than other children.
- the potential for children with SEN and disabilities being disproportionately impacted by behaviours such as bullying, without outwardly showing any signs; and
- communication barriers and difficulties in overcoming these barriers.

To address these additional challenges, schools and colleges should consider extra pastoral support for children with SEND (KCSIE, 2023).

The following are the definition of abuse and neglect as set out in Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018) however, the ultimate responsibility to assess and define the type of abuse a child or young person may be subject to is that of the Police and Children's Services – our responsibility is to understand what each category of abuse is and how this can impact on the welfare and development of our children and where we have concerns that a child or young person may be at risk of abuse and neglect (one or more categories can apply) to take appropriate action as early as possible.

**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.

**Neglect:** the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to: provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including



exclusion from home or abandonment); protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger; ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate caregivers); or ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

**Emotional abuse:** the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond a child's developmental capability as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyberbullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, although it may occur alone.

**Sexual abuse:** involves forcing or enticing a child 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. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

## Appendix F: Specific actions to take on topical safeguarding issues.

General or national guidance will not be included here. A summary of specific duties are in [Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023 Annex B](#) and Access to local guidance can be found in [Appendix A](#) of this document.

In recognition that the threshold of child protection is 'likely to suffer' significant harm, **EquiScholars HQ** may need to make a referral to children's social care. Where possible, this will involve notifying the parent/carer if it does not place the learner at further risk of harm. In all other circumstances information will be shared in line with section [2.2 Information Sharing](#).

It is also important to recognise the importance of liaising with other education settings who may have siblings attending. It is likely that they may hold additional information which will support early identification of harm and in turn develop your assessment of need.

**Child Exploitation – both Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)**

**EquiScholars HQ** will ensure that early help intervention is provided as soon as a concern of exploitation is identified. Discussion and advice will be sought from targeted services to consider what support may be available. The learner and their families will be part of any planning and interventions.

- If the learner is at risk of CSE or there is intelligence which indicates that the learner or peer group are at risk of CSE, **EquiScholars HQ** will share information with Operation Topaz (the police). This information will support proactive activity to disrupt criminal activity in relation to sexual exploitation.
- If the learner is at risk of CCE information should be shared with Somerset's Violence Reduction Unit - The VRU can advise and support settings to manage risk. Targeted support maybe available to disrupt learners from getting involved with criminality.
- Agencies will share 'Missing persons' notifications (which a learner is reported missing from home or care) with education settings with a view to support them to take proactive action and reasonable adjustments in relation to behaviour management and achieving positive educational outcomes. These should be stored securely on the learner's Safeguarding/Child Protection file.

### Domestic Abuse

Operation Encompass is a national operation where local police forces notify when the police are called to an incident to domestic abuse. Avon and Somerset have their own version of this and will notify education settings through the Education

Engagement Service (EES) whenever they have responded to a domestic abuse incident. This will enable the education setting to take proactive action and reasonable adjustments in relation to behaviour management and achieving positive educational outcomes. When a setting is concerned about the amount of police notifications they receive or disclosures of domestic abuse they should consider seeking further advice and completing an Early Help Assessment or DASH to support the family.

### Female Genital Mutilation

**Mandatory reporting duty:** [Click here for government guidance](#)

There is a legal duty for all professionals undertaking teaching work to report known cases of FGM to the police via 101. This is when they:

1. are informed by a girl under 18 that an act of FGM has been carried out on her; or
2. observe physical signs which appear to show that an act of FGM has been carried out on.

These cases must be referred to the DSL who will support them to carry out their duty. It is also advised any referrals made to the police under the mandatory reporting duty is followed up with children's social care, so an assessment of need and support is concurrently considered.

### Online Safety

- **Paragraph 132 and 139 of Keeping Children Safe in Education highlights additional actions schools should take to keep learners safe online.**
- For concerns around individual cases where a child has been harmed through online mediums, advice and guidance can be made through the **Professional Online Safeguarding Helpline**, T: 0344 381 4772, E: [helpline@saferinternet.org.uk](mailto:helpline@saferinternet.org.uk)
- Where there have been established cases of online abuse or grooming, the school settings should alert - **Child Exploitation and Online Protection command (CEOPS)** <https://www.ceop.police.uk/ceop-reporting/>

Mental health – [linked to section within main body of this policy](#)

**Child on Child Abuse** - [linked to section within main body of this policy](#).

### Serious Youth Violence

To be read in conjunction with the above section around Child Criminal Exploitation

It is important to note that should a weapon be used or there is threat of use, the police should be called immediately.

- The same day a weapon is found the school should call for a multi-disciplinary assessment of risk.
- Whilst it is acknowledged that the decision to exclude remains with the Headteacher/principal it is recommended that consultation with other agencies to ensure there is no further risks
- Alternatives to exclusions should be considered first in recognition that by doing so a learner it may be at further risk of harm out in the community.
- Police must be notified

### Preventing Radicalisation - The Prevent Duty.

All schools and colleges are subject to a duty under section 26 of the Counterterrorism and Security Act 2015 (the CTSA 2015), in the exercise of their functions, to have "due regard<sup>109</sup> to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism".<sup>110</sup> This duty is known as the Prevent duty.

The Prevent duty should be seen as part of schools' and colleges' wider safeguarding obligations. Designated safeguarding leads and other senior leaders should familiarise themselves with the revised [Prevent duty guidance: for England and Wales](#), especially paragraphs 57-76, which are specifically concerned with schools (and also covers childcare).

The guidance is set out in terms of four general themes:

- risk assessment,
- working in partnership,
- staff training,
- IT policies.

### Private Fostering

A private fostering arrangement is one that is made privately (without the involvement of a local authority) for the care of a child:

- under the age of 16 years (under 18, if disabled)
- by someone other than a parent or close relative (\*Close family relative is defined as a 'grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt' and includes half-siblings and step-parents; it does not include great-aunts or uncles, great grandparents or cousins.)
- with the intention that it should last for 28 days or more.

Cases of private fostering arrangements must be reported to children's social care to ensure that needs are adequately made.

Statutory guidance states that this should be done at least 6 weeks before the arrangement is due to start or as soon as you are made aware of the arrangements. Not to do so is a criminal offence.

Further support and reasonable adjustments should be made by the education setting to promote achievement of positive educational outcomes.

### Young Carers

A young carer is a person under 18 who regularly provides emotional and/or practical support and assistance for a family member who is disabled, physically or mentally unwell or who misuses substances. Support for Young Carers can be accessed by completing an EHA.

# Designated Safeguarding Lead Certificates



Somerset Safeguarding  
**Children Partnership**

## Certificate of Attendance

This is to certify that

**Claire Cottrell**

Attended a training course entitled:

**Advanced Child Protection (Multi-agency) 2-  
day**

on

**Monday 22 July 2024**

**Tuesday 23 July 2024**

Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership

<https://somensetsafeguardingchildren.org.uk>

# Prevent Awareness



HM Government

This document certifies that

**Mrs Claire Cottrell**  
**Head of Therapeutic Programmes**  
**Equischolars**

has successfully completed

**Prevent referrals course**  
on  
**20 July 2024**

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This e-learning course provided an overview of the Prevent referrals process. It covered how to assess and validate a concern and the correct procedure for making a referral.

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<https://www.support-people-susceptible-to-radicalisation.service.gov.uk/portal#referrals-course>

Issued on: 20 July 2024 17:23

Reference Number: 3BKR-WP84-292B





HM Government

This document certifies that

**Mrs Claire Cottrell**  
**Head of Therapeutic programmes**  
**Equischolars**

has successfully completed

**Prevent awareness course**  
on  
**17 July 2024**

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This e-learning course provided an understanding of what radicalisation, extremism and terrorism is. It covered how to identify and explore concerning behaviours and how to raise concerns.

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<https://www.support-people-susceptible-to-radicalisation.service.gov.uk/portal#awareness-course>

Issued on: 17 July 2024 21:09

Reference Number: 47HC-4D84-84DG

# Certification of Safer Recruitment in Education



highspeedtraining.co.uk

## Certificate of achievement

High Speed Training certifies that

**Kate Blackmore**

has completed

## Safer Recruitment in Education

A certified and interactive online course that teaches those involved in recruiting, mentoring, and supervising new recruits in educational settings how to apply safer recruitment processes to ensure the safeguarding of children and young people.

Issued On: 01/08/2024  
Recommended Renewal Date: 01/08/2026  
Certificate Number: T-4226488-4556977  
To verify please visit: [www.highspeedtraining.co.uk/verify](http://www.highspeedtraining.co.uk/verify)



*R. Anderson*  
Head of Learning and Development

# Data Protection Registration Certificate

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Kate Emma Louise Blackmore

EquiScholars  
Hestercombe House & Gardens  
Taunton  
Somerset, TA2 8LG

Registration reference: ZB725344  
Date registered: 25 July 2024  
Registration expires: 24 July 2025

## Data Protection Officer

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Email: [kate@equischolars.co.uk](mailto:kate@equischolars.co.uk)



Issued by: Information Commissioner's Office,  
Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire  
SK9 5AF

Telephone: 0303 123 1113  
Website: [ico.org.uk](http://ico.org.uk)

# Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Certificates

<b>Staff member</b>	<b>Certificate number</b>	<b>Issue date</b>
Kate Blackmore	001888834965	28/07/2024
Claire Cottrell	001886945926	15/07/2024

# EquiScholars HQ Whistleblowing Policy

## Introduction

All schools, academy trusts and alternative provisions are required to have appropriate procedures in place for handling whistleblowing and for ensuring all staff know who they can contact if they wish to raise a concern.

- A) This document explains the types of concerns that can be raised under this procedure, the legal protection for whistle blowers and how whistleblowing concerns will be handled.
- B) This procedure should be followed for any whistleblowing matters raised by employees of EquiScholars HQ, volunteers and agency workers.
- C) The term 'managing director' has been used throughout this procedure, however depending on the size and structure of the setting the managing director's role in the procedure may be delegated to other members of the senior leadership team or line managers as appropriate. Where the managing director is subject to these procedures, it will be managed by LADO.

## Policy Statement

EquiScholars HQ is committed to the highest possible standards of:

- openness and inclusiveness
- accountability and
- integrity.

## Aim of procedure

- A) To encourage those working at EquiScholars HQ to report suspected wrongdoing promptly, in the knowledge that it will be taken seriously.
- B) To provide guidance on how to raise concerns.
- C) To reassure staff that they are able to raise genuine concerns made in the public interest without fear of reprisals, even if they turn out to be mistaken.

## What is Whistleblowing?

Whistleblowing is when a worker reports certain types of wrongdoing or misconduct within an organisation.

The wrongdoing disclosed must be in the public interest. This means it must affect others, e.g. pupils, general public.

The wrongdoing must relate to or show one of the following:

- a criminal offence
  - a failure to comply with a legal obligation
  - a possible miscarriage of justice
  - a Health & Safety risk
  - damaging the environment
  - misuse of public money
  - corruption or unethical conduct
  - abuse of pupils, students or other users
  - deliberate concealment of any of these matters
- 
- any other substantial and relevant concern.

The concern could be about something that happened in the past, is currently happening or likely to happen in the future.

Concerns or complaints that employees wish to raise formally, about their own employment, should normally be raised using the EquiScholars HQ's Grievance Procedure, unless the employee believes the concern is in the public interest. This includes for example, concerns related to working conditions, working relations, employment rights or bullying or harassment.

## **Legal protection for whistleblowers**

Whistleblowers are protected by law from being treated unfairly or losing their jobs because they 'blow the whistle'.

Whistleblowers must hold a reasonable belief that the concern they are raising is in the public interest.

The managing director and/or LADO will provide all reasonable protection for those who raise concerns made in the public interest.

The managing director will be responsible for ensuring that appropriate personal support is offered both to a worker raising a concern and to any worker against whom allegations have been made under this procedure.

Although an employee has certain legal obligations of confidentiality to EquiScholars HQ in a limited set of circumstances, whistleblowing may override these obligations. This guidance sets out the circumstances under which these disclosures may lawfully be made.

## **Whistleblowing anonymously or confidentially**

Concerns can be raised anonymously, but EquiScholars HQ or person receiving the allegation may not be able to take it further if they haven't been provided with all the information they need.

Whistleblowers can give their name but request confidentiality and in these circumstances, every effort will be made to protect their identity.

All disclosures made under this procedure will be treated sensitively, consistently and fairly.

## **Step 1- Deciding who to report the concern to**

Concerns can be raised verbally or in writing.

You can raise your concern with your line manager. Alternatively, you can raise the matter with the managing director.

If you wish to report the matter to someone outside of the school you can contact the Director of Children's Services or Somerset County Council.

Reporting concerns to the media, in most cases will lead to the loss of your whistleblowing law rights.

Although you are not expected to prove beyond doubt the truth of your concerns, you will need to demonstrate that you have sufficient evidence or other reasonable grounds to raise them.

You may wish to obtain advice from a trade union representative, the Citizen's Advice Bureau or Public Concern at Work on 020 7404 6609 and [www.pcaw.co.uk](http://www.pcaw.co.uk).

## **Step 2**

The person with whom you have raised your concern, will decide what action is needed. They may ask you to provide further information. They will write to you within 10 days to let you know how your concern will be dealt with.

The information you can expect to receive is:

- an indication of how the concern will be dealt with
- an estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response
- whether any initial enquiries have been made
- whether further investigations will take place, and if not why not
- information about support available for you.

The person with whom you have raised your concern will at the same time notify the Provider's HR Solicitor that a whistleblowing allegation has been made.

## **Step 3**

Initial enquiries will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate.

An investigation may be carried out, depending on the nature of the allegations and the evidence/information presented. Full details of the investigation may be withheld from you to protect the confidentiality of other people.

Information will need to be passed on to those with a legitimate need to have this information and it may be necessary for you to provide a written statement and act as a witness in any subsequent disciplinary proceedings or enquiry. This will be discussed with you first.

Where an investigation is necessary, it may take the form of one or more of the following:

- an internal investigation by the managing director or LADO which may, for example, take the form of a disciplinary investigation
- an investigation by the Internal Audit Service
- a referral to the Police
- the setting up of an external independent inquiry.

## **Step 4**

You will be informed of the outcome of any investigation, in writing, and/or of any action taken, subject to the constraints of confidentiality and the law.

If you do not feel your concern has been addressed adequately you may raise it with an independent body such as one of the following as appropriate:

- your trade union
- the Citizens Advice Bureau
- a relevant professional body or regulatory organisation
- a relevant voluntary organisation
- the Police
- the Local Government Ombudsman
- Equality and Human Rights Commission

If there is an issue of an exceptionally serious nature which you believe to be substantially true, then you may disclose the issue to someone other than those listed. In determining whether it is reasonable for you to have made a disclosure the identity of the person to whom the disclosure is made will be taken into account. Disclosures to anyone outside of the recognised bodies listed may not be protected disclosures under the Act.

You have a duty to the provider not to disclose confidential information. This does not prevent you from seeking independent advice at any stage or from discussing the issue with the charity Protect (previously called Public Concern at Work) on 020 3117 2520 or



www.protect-advice.org.uk in accordance with the provisions of the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998.

## Harassment or Victimisation

EquiScholars HQ recognises that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make. However, you have a responsibility to the provider and to those for whom you are providing a service to raise serious concerns using the approach outlined in this Confidential Reporting Code.

EquiScholars HQ will not tolerate any harassment or victimisation (including informal pressures) and will take action to protect you when you raise a concern where you reasonably believe the disclosure is in the public interest.

Disciplinary action will be taken against an employee if they try to stop you from raising a concern or if an employee is responsible for any act of recrimination against you for raising a concern.

Any investigation into allegations of potential malpractice will not influence or be influenced by any disciplinary or redundancy procedures that already affect you.

## False Allegations

If an allegation is knowingly made frivolously, maliciously or for personal gain, disciplinary action may be taken. The whistleblower does not need evidence but instead need to have reasonable belief that the concerns raised are true.

## Review

This Code will be kept under review and as a result may be subject to amendment.

## Low-Level Concerns Policy (Safeguarding Policy amendment)

This section is based on concerns that do not meet the harm threshold in part 4 of Keeping Children Safe in Education.

This applies to all concerns (including allegations) about members of staff, including volunteers and contractors, which do not meet the harm threshold set out in section 1 above.

Concerns may arise through, for example:

Suspicion	Complaint
Disclosure made by a child, parent or other adult within or outside the school	Pre-employment vetting checks

We recognise the importance of responding to and dealing with any concerns in a timely manner to safeguard the welfare of children.

## **Definition of Low-Level Concerns**

The term 'Low-Level' concern is any concern – no matter how small – that an adult working in or on behalf of the school may have acted in a way that:

Is inconsistent with the staff code of conduct, including inappropriate conduct outside of work, **and**

Does not meet the allegations threshold or is otherwise not considered serious enough to consider a referral to the designated officer at the local authority

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

Being overly friendly with children

Having favourites

Taking photographs of children on their mobile phone

Engaging with a child on a one-to-one basis in a secluded area or behind a closed door Using inappropriate sexualised, intimidating or offensive language

## **Sharing Low-Level concerns**

We recognise the importance of creating a culture of openness, trust and transparency to encourage all staff to share low-level concerns so that they can be addressed appropriately.

We will create this culture by:

Ensuring staff are clear about what appropriate behaviour is, and are confident in distinguishing expected and appropriate behaviour from concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour, in themselves and others

Have clear policies and procedures

Empowering staff to share any low-level concerns as per section 7.7 of this policy

Empowering staff to self-refer

Addressing unprofessional behaviour and supporting the individual to correct it at an early stage

Providing a responsive, sensitive and proportionate handling of such concerns when they are raised

Helping to identify any weakness in the school's safeguarding system

## **Reporting a low-level concern**

- A) Low level concerns about a member of staff should be reported to the Managing Director as per the companies Child Protection procedures via SENAP.
- B) If the concern is about the Director's this should be reported to LADO
- C) Low level concerns about Volunteers, contractors and local authority visiting staff will also be reported to their employers.
- D) Staff should use the companies Reporting Form on the system.

## **Responding to low-level concerns**

If the concern is raised via a third party, managing director will collect evidence where necessary by speaking:

Directly to the person who raised the concern, unless it has been raised anonymously

To the individual involved and any witnesses

The managing director will use the information collected to categorise the type of behaviour and determine any further action, in line with the alternative provision's staff Code of Conduct.

- Allegations that meet the harm threshold will be referred to the LADO for advice.
- Low level concerns that the alternative provision feel may need further guidance on will be referred to the LADO for advice.
- Low level concerns that the alternative provision feel they can deal with internally will be dealt with via the alternative provision's usual child protection investigation process.
- The alternative provision will engage with its HR adviser where it is necessary to undertake further investigation and/or deal with the concern under relevant processes.

## **Record keeping**

All low-level concerns will be recorded on our system. In addition to details of the concern raised, records will include the context in which the concern arose, any action taken and the rationale for decisions and action taken.

Records will be:

Kept confidential, held securely and comply with the DPA 2018 and UK GDPR

Reviewed so that potential patterns of concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour can be identified. Where a pattern of such behaviour is identified, we will decide on a course of action, either through our disciplinary procedures or, where a pattern of behaviour moves from a concern to meeting the harms threshold as described in section 1 of this appendix, we will refer it to the designated officer at the local authority

Retained at least until the individual leaves employment at the school

Where a low-level concern relates to a volunteer or contractor, we will notify the individual's employer, so any potential patterns of inappropriate behaviour can be identified.

## **Reviewing a low-level concern**

Records will be reviewed so that potential patterns of concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour can be identified.

Where a pattern of such behaviour is identified, the Managing Director will decide on a course of action, which may include:

- Disciplinary investigation and/or proceedings
- Management Advice, including recommendations for training
- Referral to the LADO (where a pattern of behaviour moves from a concern to meeting the harm threshold).

If the concern relates volunteers, or any other concerns arise, Project One can contact the LADO for further advice.

## **References**

We will not include low-level concerns in references unless:

The concern (or group of concerns) has met the threshold for referral to the designated officer at the local authority and is found to be substantiated; and/or

The concern (or group of concerns) relates to issues which would ordinarily be included in a reference, such as misconduct or poor performance.