

# **SOUTH WEST SCHOOLS' FEDERATION**

## **SAFEGUARDING POLICY**



### **RATIONALE**

*To work together to safeguard children*

### **Purpose and Aims**

- To protect children from maltreatment
- To prevent impairment of children's health or development
- To ensure children grow and learn with the provision of safe and effective care
- To take action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

The purpose of SWSF safeguarding policy is to provide a secure framework for the workforce in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of those pupils who attend our school. We abide by the 2016 statutory guidance ' Keeping Children Safe in Education' which all staff are asked to read. The policy aims to ensure that:

- All our pupils are safe and protected from harm;
- Other elements of provision and policies are in place to enable pupils to feel safe and adopt safe practices;
- Staff, pupils, governors, visitors, volunteers and parents are aware of the expected behaviours' and the school's and EYFS setting's legal responsibilities in relation to the safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all of our pupils.

Safeguarding action may be needed to protect children and learners from:

- neglect
- physical abuse
- sexual abuse
- emotional abuse
- bullying, including online bullying and prejudice-based bullying
- racist, disability and homophobic or transphobic abuse
- gender-based violence/violence against women and girls
- radicalisation and/or extremist behaviour
- child sexual exploitation and trafficking
- the impact of new technologies on sexual behaviour, for example sexting
- teenage relationship abuse
- substance misuse
- issues that may be specific to a local area or population, for example gang activity and youth violence

- domestic violence
- female genital mutilation
- forced marriage
- fabricated or induced illness
- poor parenting, particularly in relation to babies and young children
- other issues not listed here but that pose a risk to children, young people and vulnerable adults.

Safeguarding is not just about protecting children, learners and vulnerable adults from deliberate harm, neglect and failure to act. It relates to broader aspects of care and education, including:

- Children's and learners' health and safety and well-being
- the use of reasonable force
- meeting the needs of children and learners with medical conditions
- providing first aid
- educational visits
- intimate care and emotional well-being
- online safety<sup>1</sup> and associated issues
- appropriate arrangements to ensure children's and learners' security, taking into account the local context.

## **Ethos**

All children deserve the opportunity to achieve their full potential. Although this may appear dated the principles that were published in the *Every Child Matters* Green Paper alongside the formal response to the report into the death of Victoria Climbié set out good outcomes that are key to children and young people's wellbeing:

- be healthy;
- stay safe;
- enjoy and achieve;
- make a positive contribution; and
- achieve economic wellbeing.

The five outcomes are universal ambitions for every child and young person, whatever their background or circumstances. Improving outcomes for all children and young people underpins all of the development and work within this school.

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<sup>1</sup> The term 'online safety' reflects a widening range of issues associated with technology and a user's access to content, contact with others and behavioural issues.

Safeguarding in SWSF is considered everyone's responsibility and as such our schools aim to create the safest environment within which every pupil has the opportunity to achieve their Five Outcomes SWSF recognizes the contribution it can make in ensuring that all pupils registered or who use our school feel that they will be listened to and appropriate action taken. We will do this by working in partnership with other agencies and seeking to establish effective working relationships with parents, carers and other colleagues to develop and provide activities and opportunities throughout our curriculum that will help to equip our children with the skills they need. This will include materials and learning experiences that will encourage our children to develop essential life skills and protective behaviours.

### **Responsibilities and expectations**

South West Federation has a Governing body whose legal responsibility it is to make sure that the schools have an effective safeguarding policy and procedures in place and monitors that the schools comply with them. The Governing body should also ensure that the policy is made available to parents and carers if requested. It is the responsibility of the Governing body to ensure that all staff and volunteers are properly checked to make sure they are safe to work with the pupils who attend our school and that the school has procedures for handling allegations of abuse made against members of staff (including the Head Teacher) or volunteers. The Governing Body has appointed a Senior Designated Officer (SDO) who has lead responsibility for dealing with all safeguarding issues in our school.

#### **The Senior Designated Officers are:**

Sandy Brown – Executive Head  
Damian Railston – Deputy Executive Head – Combe Martin  
Gail Holmes – Head of Woolacombe School  
Sue Cottrell – School Business Manager – Bampton

**Deputies:** (If those attached to schools are not available *person/s can also be contacted with any safeguarding concerns*)

Angie Fernyhough – SWSF & EYFS  
Gary Bladon – Bampton  
Raksha Greenbank – School Business Manager

The **Named Member(s) of the Governing Body for Safeguarding** is Stephanie Molligoda, Lucy Bull and Kevin Chandra.

It is the responsibility of the SDOs to ensure that all safeguarding issues raised in school are effectively responded to, recorded and referred to the appropriate agency. They are also responsible for arranging whole school safeguarding training for all staff and volunteers who work with children and young people in our school. The SDO must ensure that the whole school safeguarding training takes place at least every three years; which they can deliver within school provided they are linked in to the support and quality assurance process offered by the Local Authority.

The SDOs are required to attend or ensure that a senior member of staff who has the relevant training and access to appropriate supervision, attends where appropriate, all child protection case conferences, reviews, core groups or meetings where it concerns a

child at our school and to contribute to multi-agency discussions to safeguard and promote the child's welfare

The SDOs are required to complete an annual Safeguarding Audit which demonstrates that the Safeguarding arrangements in the school are being met. If the self-assessment highlights any areas for improvement, this will be detailed in the action plan which will be signed off and monitored by the Named Governor for Safeguarding to ensure these improvements are implemented. The self-review assessment is to be shared with the Local Authority, who will have an auditing role in ensuring the school is meeting its Safeguarding requirements under s.175/157 of the Education Act 2002 for both maintained and independent schools.

All Child Protection concerns need to be acted on **immediately**. If you are concerned that a child may be at risk or is actually suffering abuse, you should tell the Senior Designated Officer.

**All Adults, including the SDO, have a duty to refer all known or suspected cases of abuse to the relevant agency including Children and Young Peoples Service (CYPS) – Social Care or the Police.** Where a disclosure is made to a visiting staff member from a different agency, e.g. Connexions or School Nurse, it is the responsibility of that agency staff to formally report the referral to the School's Designated Person in the first instance. Where the disclosure is made by a child attending a Short Stay School (SSS) or alternative provision, the referral should be recorded and referred to the On-Site Senior Designated Officer and a formal notification made to the school's SDO where the child is on roll for information or appropriate action to be taken. Any records made should be kept securely on the Child's main school/child Protection file.

## **Recognising concerns, signs and indicators of abuse**

Safeguarding is not just about protecting children from deliberate harm. For our schools it includes such things as pupil safety, bullying, racist abuse and harassment, educational visits, intimate care, children missing education and internet safety etc. The witnessing of abuse can have a damaging affect on those who are party to it, as well as the child subjected to the actual abuse, and in itself will have a significant impact on the health and emotional well-being of the child. Abuse can take place in any family, institution or community setting, by telephone or on the internet. Abuse can often be difficult to recognize as children may behave differently or seem unhappy for many reasons, as they move through the stages of childhood or their family circumstances change. However, it is important to know the indicators of abuse and to be alert to the **need to consult further**.

### **Physical Abuse**

This can involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, punching, kicking, scalding, burning, drowning and suffocating. It can also result when a parent or carer deliberately causes the ill health of a child in order to seek attention through fabricated or induced illness. This was previously known as Munchausen's Syndrome by Proxy.

### **Emotional Abuse**

Emotional Abuse is where a child's need for love, security, recognition and praise is not met. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of someone else such as in

Domestic Violence or Domestic Abuse. A parent, carer or authority figure is considered emotionally abusive when they are consistently hostile, rejecting, threatening or undermining toward a child or other family member. It can also occur when children are prevented from having social contact with others or if inappropriate expectations are placed upon them. Symptoms that indicate emotional abuse include:

- Excessively clingy or attention seeking.
- Very low self-esteem or excessive self-criticism.
- Withdrawn behaviour or fearfulness.
- Lack of appropriate boundaries with strangers; too eager to please.
- Eating disorders or self-harm

## **Sexual Abuse**

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. This may include physical contact both penetrative and non-penetrative, or viewing pornographic material including through the use of the internet. Indicators of sexual abuse include: allegations or disclosures, genital soreness, injuries or disclosure, sexually transmitted diseases, inappropriate sexualized behaviour including words, play or drawing.

## **Children with sexually harmful behaviour**

Children may be harmed by other children or young people. Staff will be aware of the harm caused by bullying and will use the school's anti bullying procedures where necessary. However, there will be occasions when a pupil's behaviour warrants a response under child protection rather than anti bullying procedures.

Young people who display such behaviour may be victims of abuse themselves and the child protection procedures will be followed for both victim and perpetrator. Staff who become concerned about a pupil's behaviour, including any known online sexual behaviour, should speak to the DSO as soon as possible.

## **Neglect**

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs which can significantly harm their health and development. Neglect can include inadequate supervision (being left alone for long periods of time), lack of stimulation, social contact or education, lack of appropriate food, shelter, appropriate clothing for conditions and medical attention and treatment when necessary.

## **What to do if you are concerned**

If a child makes an allegation or disclosure of abuse against an adult or other child or young person, it is important that you:

- Stay calm and listen carefully.
- Reassure them that they have done the right thing in telling you.
- Do not investigate or ask leading questions.
- Let them know that you will need to tell someone else.
- Do not promise to keep what they have told you a secret.
- Inform your Senior Designated Officer as soon as possible.
- Make a written record of the allegation, disclosure or incident which you must sign, date and record your position using the schools' safeguarding record log forms.

If you are concerned that a member of staff or adult in a position of trust poses a danger to a child or young person or that they might be abusing a child or young person you should report your concerns to the Headteacher. Where those concerns relate to the Headteacher however, this should be reported to the Chair of Governors using the schools 'Whistle blowing' policy.

## **Managing Allegations**

We are aware of the possibility of allegations being made against members of staff or volunteers that are working or may come into contact with children and young people whilst in our school. Allegations will usually be that some kind of abuse has taken place. They can be made by children and young people or other concerned adults. Allegations are made for a variety of reasons:

- Abuse has actually taken place.
- Something has happened to the child that reminds them of a past event – the child is unable to recognize that the situation and people are different; Children can misinterpret your language or your actions.
- Some children recognize that allegations can be powerful and if they are angry with you about something they can make an allegation as a way of hitting out.
- An allegation can be a way of seeking attention.

If an allegation is made against an adult in a position of trust whether they be members of staff or volunteers this should be brought to the immediate attention of the SDO who will advise the Headteacher. In the case of the allegation being made against the Headteacher this will be brought to the immediate attention of the Chair of Governors. The Headteacher/Chair of Governors will need to discuss with the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) the nature of the allegations in order for the appropriate action to be taken. This may constitute an initial evaluation meeting or strategy discussion depending on the allegation being made. Head teachers will need to:

- Refer to the LADO immediately and follow up in writing within 48 hours. Consider safeguarding arrangements of the child or young person to ensure they are away from the alleged abuser.
- Contact the parents or carers of the child/young person if advised to do so by the LADO.
- Consider the rights of the staff member for a fair and equal process of investigation.
- Ensure that the appropriate disciplinary procedures are followed including whether suspending a member of staff from work until the outcome of any investigation is deemed necessary.
- Act on any decision made in any strategy meeting.
- Advise the Independent Safeguarding Authority where a member of staff has been disciplined or dismissed as a result of the allegations being founded.

## **Training**

All members of staff and volunteers will have access to whole school safeguarding training at least every three years. We will also, as part of our induction, issue information in relation to our Safeguarding policy and any policy related to safeguarding and promoting our children/young people's welfare to all newly appointed staff and volunteers. Our Senior Designated Officer and Deputies will undertake further safeguarding training in addition to the whole school training. This will be undertaken at least every two years

which updates their awareness and understanding of the impact of the wide agenda of safeguarding issues. This will support both the SDO/Deputies to be able to better undertake their role and support the school in ensuring our safeguarding arrangements are robust and achieving better outcomes for the pupils in our school. This includes taking part in multi-agency training in addition to safeguarding training.

Our Governing body will have access to safeguarding training and our Named Governor for Safeguarding will also undertake additional training at least every two years to support their employers' role in Handling Allegations against adults who work with children and young people, including our staff and volunteers.

Our safeguarding arrangements are reported on a termly basis to our Governing body and our Safeguarding policy is reviewed annually, in order to keep it updated in line with local and national guidance/legislation.

We will include our Safeguarding Policy in our school prospectus/website and will post copies of our policy throughout the school. We are also able to arrange for our policy to be made available to parents whose first language is not English, on request.

### **Useful Contacts:**

[MASH - Devon](#)

[www.devon.gov.uk/mash.htm](http://www.devon.gov.uk/mash.htm) [Cached](#)

The Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (**MASH**) is the central resource for the whole of **Devon** receiving all safeguarding and child protection enquiries.

### EYFS SETTINGS

[MASH Contact Details - Devon County Council](#)

[www.devon.gov.uk/mash\\_contact\\_details.pdf](http://www.devon.gov.uk/mash_contact_details.pdf)

Early Years and Childcare Service **MASH Contact Details** Nikki Phillips Locality

Manager Exeter, East & Mid **Devon** Tel. 01392 385394 Mobile 07969 68469

Devon Safeguarding Children Board [www.dscb.info/](http://www.dscb.info/)

South West Child Protection Procedures [www.swcpp.org.uk](http://www.swcpp.org.uk)

BECTA [www.becta.org.uk](http://www.becta.org.uk)

Child Exploitation and Online Protection Agency [www.ceop.org.uk](http://www.ceop.org.uk)

[www.thinkuknow.co.uk](http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk)

### **CYPS area contact numbers:**

(9am - 5pm Monday to Thursday, 9am – 4pm Friday)

North Devon -	01271 388 660
Exeter and East -	01392 384 444
Mid Devon -	08448 805 838
Teignbridge, South & West Devon -	01392 386 000

Counselling support for DCC employees: Contact Wellbeing@work Referral Co-ordinator on 01392 383277 or [counsel@devon.gov.uk](mailto:counsel@devon.gov.uk)

## Current Safeguarding Issues

***(The following Safeguarding issues are all considered to be child Protection issues and should be referred immediately to the most relevant agency. The issues featured below are linked to guidance and local procedures which can be found on the South West Child Protection Procedures at [www.swcpp.org.uk](http://www.swcpp.org.uk) (Direct links to the policies listed below are included where available).***

Some members of our communities hold beliefs that may be common within particular cultures but which are against the law of England. SWSF does not condone practices that are illegal and which are harmful to children. Examples of particular practices are:

### **Forced Marriage**

SWSF does not support the idea of forcing someone to marry without their consent.

### **Under-age Marriage**

In England, a young person cannot legally marry until they are 16 years old (without the consent of their parents or carers) nor have sexual relationships.

### **Genital mutilation/female circumcision**

This is against the law, yet for some communities it is considered a religious act and cultural requirement. It is illegal for someone to arrange for a child to go abroad with the intention of having her circumcised. If any of the above areas of concern is brought to the attention of SWSF we will report those concerns to the appropriate agency in order to prevent this form of abuse taking place.

### **Ritualistic Abuse**

Some faiths believe that spirits and demons can possess people (including children). What should never be considered is the use of any physical or psychological violence to get rid of the possessing spirit. This is abusive and will result in the criminal conviction of those using this form of abuse even if the intention is to help the child.

### **Children Missing Education**

“Basic to safeguarding children is to ensure their attendance at school.” (OFSTED 2002). Children are best protected by regularly attending school where they will be safe from harm and where there are professionals to monitor their well-being. At SWSF we will encourage the full attendance of all of our children at school. Where we have concerns that a child is missing education because of suspected abuse, we will liaise with the appropriate agency including the Education Attendance Service to effectively manage the risks and to prevent abuse from taking place

### **Sexually Active under Eighteen years old**

It is acknowledged by those working with young people that most young people under the age of 18 will have an interest in sex and sexual relationships. The Protocol for Sexually Active Young People under 18 years old has been designed to assist those working with children and young people to identify where these relationships may be abusive, and the children and young people may need the provision of protection or additional services. At SWSF we will ensure our policy for managing this issue links to the available protocol.

### **Safeguarding Disabled Children**



Disabled children have exactly the same human rights to be safe from abuse and neglect, to be protected from harm and achieve the Every Child Matters outcomes as non-disabled children.

Disabled children do however require additional action. This is because they experience greater risks and *'created vulnerability'* as a result of negative attitudes about disabled children and unequal access to services and resources, and because they may have additional needs relating to physical, sensory, cognitive and/ or communication impairment (*Safeguarding Children, DCSF, July 2009*) SWSF will ensure that our disabled children are listened to and responded to appropriately where they have concerns regarding abuse. In order to do this we will ensure that our staff and volunteers receive the relevant training to raise awareness and have access to specialist staff in the event they have concerns regarding abuse of a child.

### **Safer Recruitment and Selection**

It is a requirement for all agencies to ensure that all staff recruited to work with children and young people are properly selected and checked. At SWSF we will ensure that we have a member on every recruitment panel who has received the appropriate recruitment and selection training. That all of our staff are appropriately qualified and have the relevant employment history and checks to ensure they are safe to work with children in compliance with the Key Safeguarding Employment Standards.

### **Honour Based Violence**

'Honour based violence' is a crime or incident, which has or may have been committed to protect or defend the honour of the family and/or community'. It is important to be alert to signs of distress and indications such as self-harm, absence from school and truancy, infections resulting from female genital mutilation, isolation from peers, being monitored by family, not participating in school activities, unreasonable restrictions at home. Where it is suspected that a child/young person is at risk from Honour based violence SWSF will report those concerns to the appropriate agency in order to prevent this form of abuse taking place.

### **Trafficked Children**

Child trafficking involves moving children across or within national or international borders for the purposes of exploitation. Exploitation includes children being used for sex work, domestic work, restaurant/ sweatshop, drug dealing, shoplifting and benefit fraud. Where SWSF is made aware of a child is suspected of or actually being trafficked/exploited we will report our concerns to the appropriate agency.

### **Domestic Abuse**

The Government defines domestic abuse as ***"Any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional) between adults who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality"***.

Staff need to understand what is required of them if children are members of the household where domestic abuse is known or suspected to be taking place. Our policy includes action to be taken regarding referrals to the Police and Children and Young People's Services and any action to be taken where a member of staff is the alleged perpetrator or victim of domestic abuse. At SWSF we will follow our safeguarding policy and report any suspected concerns regarding Domestic Abuse to the relevant agency.

### **Private Fostering**

Private fostering is an arrangement made between the parent and the private foster carer, who then becomes responsible for caring for the child in such a way as to safeguard and promote his/her welfare.

A privately fostered child means a child under the age of 16 (18 if a disabled child) who is cared for and provided with accommodation by someone other than:

- A parent.
- A person who is not a parent but has parental responsibility.
- A close relative.
- A Local Authority.

for more than 28 days and where the care is intended to continue. It is a statutory duty for us at SWSF to inform the Local Authority where we are made aware of a child or young person who may be subject to private fostering arrangements.

### **Child Exploitation and E-Safety**

Children and young people can be exploited and suffer bullying through their use of modern technology such as the internet, mobile phones and social networking sites. In order to minimize the risks to our children and young people SWSF will ensure that we have in place appropriate measures such as security filtering, and an acceptable use policy linked to our E-Safety policy. We will ensure that staff are aware of how not to compromise their position of trust in or outside of the school and are aware of the dangers associated with social networking sites.

Our E-safety policy will clearly state that mobile phone or electronic communications with a student at our school is not acceptable other than for approved school business e.g. coursework, mentoring. Where it is suspected that a child is at risk from internet abuse or cyber bullying we will report our concerns to the appropriate agency.

### **Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub – MASH**

This is a new initiative which has been developed by Devon and Cornwall Police, Devon Children and Young People's Service (CYPS) and partner agencies, supported by the Devon Safeguarding Children Board. Devon's Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) will provide information sharing across all partners involved in safeguarding – including statutory, non-statutory and third sector sources. All partners work together to provide the highest level of knowledge and analysis to make sure that all safeguarding activity and intervention is timely, proportionate and necessary.

### **How will it works**

All information within the MASH is collected and decision-making will takes place in a timely manner within agreed timescales depending on the priority criteria when the concern is referred to a Hub.

#### **HIGH RISK - RED**

- MASH INFORMATION PACKAGE TO BE COMPLETED WITHIN 2 HRS AND
- Police & CYPS assessment team receive immediate notification with research to follow

Immediate and serious safeguarding concern requiring action to ensure the safety of the child and possible necessity to secure and preserve physical evidence that might otherwise be lost.

#### **MEDIUM RISK - AMBER**

- MASH product within one working day

There are significant concerns but immediate urgent action is not required to safeguard the child although an investigation under Section 47 of the Children Act 1989 is likely.

## LOW RISK - GREEN

- MASH information package to be completed within three working days or
- Immediate referral to ERS (Practice Manager, CYPS, decision)

The referrer clearly has concerns about a child's wellbeing. The child may be a child in need as defined by section 17 of Children Act 1989 however there is no information at this stage to suggest an investigation under Section 47 of the Children Act 1989 would be required.

The MASH:

- Manages contacts and referrals received from any source (usually CYPS and Police 121A reports)
- Develops a document recording the concern information and all other available information in the Hubs within agreed timescales and an Early Years and Families manager makes an informed decision using all of the available information.
- Develops concern information into an Early Years and Families referral if services are required under section 17 or section 47 of The Children Act 1989
- Liaises with the Early Response Service for children and young people who need services but do not meet The Children Act 1989 threshold
- Provides consultation to agency referrers about thresholds, appropriate action to be undertaken and services.

The Hub contributes to improved outcomes for safeguarding children because it has the ability to swiftly collate and share information held by the various agencies and to provide a multi-agency risk assessment of each case for 'actual or likely harm'.

*The above list is not exhaustive and as new policy guidance and legislation develops within the remit of Safeguarding we will review and update our policies and procedures as appropriate and in line with the Devon Safeguarding Children Board and Local Authority.*

### Related School Policies

'.....safeguarding covers more than the contribution made to child protection in relation to individual children. It also encompasses issues such as pupil health and safety and bullying.....and a range of other issues, for example, arrangements for meeting the medical needs of children ....providing first aid, school security, drugs and substance misuse, etc.

There may also be other safeguarding issues that are specific to the local area or population'

This policy will cross reference to related school policies and other protocol:

Behaviour (Including guidance on positive-handling)	Adopted:
Anti-bullying	Adopted:
Confidentiality	Adopted:
Exclusions	Adopted:
Work experience	Adopted:
Drugs and substances	Adopted:

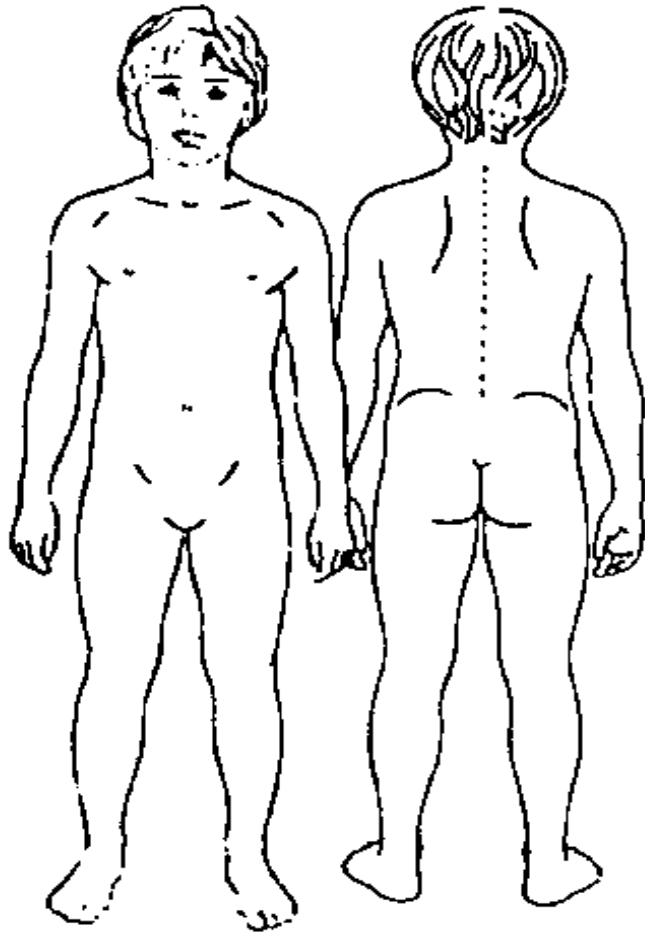
Attendance  
 ICT & Internet Safety  
 Health and Safety  
 Racial Discrimination  
 Single Equality Scheme  
 Educational Visits  
 Code of Conduct  
 Whistle Blowing  
 Managing Allegations  
 Physical Restraint  
 Safe Recruitment  
 Information Sharing

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***For further information regarding any child protection procedure, please consult [www.swcpp.org.uk](http://www.swcpp.org.uk)***

## SWSF BODY MAP

<b>FILE NAME:</b>			
<b>CHILD'S NAME:</b>			
<b>DATE OF BIRTH:</b>		<b>NHS No:</b>	



SIGNED: .....  
DATE: .....





## **SWSF APPENDIX TO SAFEGUARDING POLICY**

### **Information sharing and confidentiality for practitioners - things to know and issues to consider Why information sharing matters**

It's important to ensure a child or young person understands their personal information will be treated respectfully and confidentially. This provides a safe space for them to be open and honest with the people caring for them.

Establishing this form of trust is fundamental for the provision of safe and effective care.

But when working with children and young people, it's important to keep in mind two essential factors:

- timely information sharing is key to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. It enables intervention that crucially tackles problems at an early stage
- if a child is at risk or suffering significant harm, the law supports you to share information without consent.

Case reviews have shown us that a lack of appropriate and timely information sharing is a key issue.

Sharing information will help other professionals who have contact with the family to better understand the risks faced by the child.

You may, for example, have information about issues related to a parent or other adult which may be impacting negatively on the child's wellbeing. This information will contribute to building a clear picture of the child's life. The better the picture, the more quickly appropriate action can be taken to protect a child.

Understanding when information should be shared. Every person has a right to privacy under the European Convention on Human Rights (Article 8).

But if you have any worries or doubts about the wellbeing of a child you'll have to decide whether you need to share personal or confidential data. Sharing information appropriately is key to putting in place effective child protection services.

Unless there's a statutory duty or a court order to share information, you'll need to use your professional judgement based on the facts of the case to decide whether to share and what should be shared.

When you're making these decisions, the safety and welfare of the child must be your key consideration. You must have a clear and legitimate purpose for sharing information. Share information early on, when you see signs of emerging problems. This means support can be put in place at the time it's most likely to help. For

example, referring a family to other health or children's services where they can get the care and support they need can be effective preventative action. Consider the issues objectively and impartially. Make sure your own cultural background or religious beliefs don't affect your decisions. If you feel you need more advice about particular religious or cultural practices, you could contact a voluntary organisation that has experience of working with a particular community.

Get help on deciding what to do – talk to your manager or the person in your organisation who has a lead role for safeguarding children. If you work in the NHS you can speak to a Caldicott Guardian.

Ensure the outcome of your discussion is recorded.

Never assume someone else will pass on information about a child, a parent or other adult that may be critical to keeping a child safe.

## Getting consent

Ask for consent to share confidential information unless:

- asking for consent may increase the risk of significant harm to the child or young person
- a delay in sharing information may increase the risk of harm to the child or young person.

You can get consent either verbally or in writing although it's better to get written consent. This is to avoid any future dispute. A person can withdraw consent at any time.

If a child doesn't have the capacity to understand and make their own decisions, ask a person with parental responsibility.

Be open and honest. Ensure the person you're asking for consent understands what information will be shared and why it needs to be shared. Tell them who will see the information and what they will use it for.

It's important to respect the wishes of a child or any person who doesn't consent to share confidential information.

If you're not given consent to share information, you may still lawfully go ahead if it can be justified to be in the public interest.

For example, to:

- protect children from significant harm
- promote the welfare of children.

Always think of the safety and wellbeing of the child first. Always act within the guidelines of your professional code of practice. If a child or adult refuses to give their consent to share confidential information, you'll need to make a professional judgement based on what you think will happen if the information is shared, against what you think will happen if it isn't. Discuss this with your supervisor, manager or the child protection lead.

In England, to find out more about Government guidance see:

- HM Government (2015) Information sharing: advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services to children, young people, parents and carers. This guide includes a myth busting section that helps to dispel mistaken beliefs that prevent effective information sharing.

If you share information without consent you'll need to explain to the child or adult you're going to do this and why, unless doing this will put the child at risk of significant harm.

## What to think about if you're going to share information

It's natural to feel uneasy about sharing information or worried about the extent you can do so. But you can't allow these fears to stand in the way of ensuring the safety and welfare of the child. Take time to reflect on the case and consider how the information you share will benefit the child.

Check information sharing guidance produced by your own agency.

Check your Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) or Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) guidance on information sharing.

Respect and support other agencies and professionals need to maintain good relationships with the child or family.

## What information needs to be shared?

You may need to share information about a child or about a parent or other adult in order to protect the child. Decide what is appropriate to share and who it will be shared with.

Identify how much information to share. Think about the purpose for sharing information and share only what you judge is relevant and necessary to fulfil this.

Use language that is clear and precise. Be aware that different agencies use different terminology or may have a different understanding of particular terms.

Be clear about what is factual in the information and what is based on professional opinion or reports from other people.



## What to do when sharing information

Make sure all your decisions on information sharing keep the safety and wellbeing of the child and anyone else who may be affected as your first consideration.

Ensure the information you're sharing for the purpose of protecting a child is relevant to that purpose and is accurate, unbiased and up-to-date.

It's important to follow properly worked-out information-sharing protocols. These should be implemented between all the agencies and professionals involved.

Share information securely and only with the relevant staff in the organisation who need to have it.

Understand the limits of any consent given and ensure those receiving the information understand this too (for example, in relation to any intention to pass the information on to others).

Keep a written record of your decision to share information and the reasons why. Keep a record of who you have shared information with, what the information was, and why it was shared. Always work in accordance with your organisation's procedures for recording information.

In England, look at page 12 of the guide HM Government (2015) Information sharing: advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services to children, young people, parents and carers to see a flow chart of the process of sharing information.

Getting our priorities right includes a flow chart summarising key considerations when sharing information.

It's important to remember that good information sharing isn't just about what you share. The safety and wellbeing of the child may be at stake and may depend on the way you share information and who you share it with.

Sharing information effectively includes:

- formal face-to-face strategy meetings where ideas can be thoroughly explored
- developing shared plans
- putting in place a shared record for a child receiving services from several agencies
- effective information sharing between teams in the same agency
- sharing information across geographical borders, including efficient transfer of the child's records if they move to a different location.

Section 15 of Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) (2011) Data sharing code of practice provides handy checklists for the overall process of data sharing and Section 10 of the same guide lists 6 key things to avoid.

## References and further reading

HM Government (2015) Information sharing: advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services to children, young people, parents and carers.

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/419628/Information\\_sharing\\_advice\\_safeguarding\\_practitioners.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/419628/Information_sharing_advice_safeguarding_practitioners.pdf)

HM Government (2015) Working together to safeguard children.

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/419595/Working\\_Together\\_to\\_Safeguard\\_Children.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/419595/Working_Together_to_Safeguard_Children.pdf)

Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) (2011) Data sharing code of practice.

<https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-data-protection/data-sharing/>

