



GOVERNMENT OFFICES
FOR THE ENGLISH REGIONS

GUIDANCE FOR SAFER WORKING PRACTICE FOR ADULTS WHO WORK WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE.



A group of seven children and one adult woman are gathered on a grassy area. The woman, wearing a black suit, is crouching on the grass and smiling broadly. The children, of various ages, are surrounding her, some with their hands on her shoulders or arms, all appearing to be in a joyful and playful interaction. The background consists of dense green foliage and trees.

Most recent Education guidance is
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CONTENTS

1. Overview

- 1.1 Background p04
- 1.2 What to do if you are worried a child is being abused p05

2. Using the Guidance

- 2.1 Status of Document p06
- 2.2 Purpose of the Guidance p06
- 2.3 Underlying Principles p06
- 2.4 Definitions p07
- 2.5 How to Use the Document p07

3. Guidance for Safer Working Practices

- 01 Context p09
- 02 'Unsuitability' p09
- 03 Duty of Care p10
- 04 Confidentiality p11
- 05 Making a Professional Judgement p12
- 06 Power and Positions of Trust p13
- 07 Propriety and Behaviour p14
- 08 Dress and Appearance p14

- 09 Personal Living Space p15
- 10 Gifts, Rewards and Favouritism p16
- 11 Infatuations p17
- 12 Communication with Children and Young People (including Use of Technology) p18
- 13 Social Contact p19
- 14 Sexual Contact p20
- 15 Physical Contact p21
- 16 Other Activities that Require Physical Contact p23
- 17 Behaviour Management p24
- 18 Use of Physical Intervention p25
- 19 Children and Young People in Distress p26
- 20 Intimate Care p26
- 21 Personal Care p27
- 22 First Aid and Administration of Medication p28
- 23 One to One Situations p29
- 24 Home Visits p30
- 25 Transporting Children and Young People p31
- 26 Trips and Outings p32
- 27 Photography and Video p33

- 28 Access to Inappropriate Images and Internet Usage p34
- 29 Whistle Blowing p35
- 30 Sharing Concerns and Recording Incidents p35

4. Appendices p36

For further information please contact your Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) or the Safeguarding team at your local council.

Your Local Safeguarding Children Board will also have information.

1. OVERVIEW

1.1. Background

All adults who come into contact with children and young people in their work have a duty of care⁴ to safeguard and promote their welfare.

The Children Act 2004, through the Stay Safe outcome of the Every Child Matters Change for Children programme⁵, places a duty on organisations to safeguard⁶ and promote the well-being of children and young people. This includes the need to ensure that all adults who work with or on behalf of children and young people in these organisations are competent, confident and safe to do so.

The vast majority of adults who work with children act professionally and aim to provide a safe and supportive environment which secures the well-being and very best outcomes for children and young people in their care. However, it is recognised that in this area of work tensions and misunderstandings can occur. It is here that the behaviour of adults can give rise to allegations of abuse being made against them. Allegations may be malicious or misplaced. They may arise from differing perceptions of the same event, but when

they occur, they are inevitably distressing and difficult for all concerned. Equally, it must be recognised that some allegations will be genuine and there are adults who will deliberately seek out, create or exploit opportunities to abuse children. It is therefore essential that all possible steps are taken to safeguard children and young people and ensure that the adults working with them are safe to do so.

Some concerns have been raised about the potential vulnerability of adults in this area of work. It was suggested that there was a need for clearer advice about what constitutes illegal behaviour and what might be considered as misconduct. This document has been produced in response to these concerns. It was written by a team of individuals from various backgrounds who are knowledgeable about allegation procedures and the circumstances in which allegations might arise and provides practical guidance for anyone who works with, or on behalf of children and young people regardless of their role, responsibilities or status. It seeks to ensure that the duty to promote and safeguard the wellbeing of children is in part, achieved by raising awareness of illegal, unsafe and inappropriate behaviours.

Whilst every attempt has been made to cover a wide range of situations, it is recognised that this guidance cannot cover all eventualities. There may be times when professional judgements are made in situations not covered by this document, or which directly contravene the guidance given by their employer. It is expected that in these circumstances adults will always advise their senior colleagues of the justification for any such action already taken or proposed.

It is also recognised that not all adults who work with children and young people work as paid or contracted employees. The principles and guidance outlined in this document still apply and should be followed by all adults whose work brings them into contact with children and young people.

The guidance contained in this document has due regard to current legislation and statutory guidance.

⁴ The duty which rests upon an individual to ensure that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure the safety of a child or young person involved in any activity, or interaction for which that individual is responsible. Any person in charge of, or working with children and young people in any capacity is considered, both legally and morally, to owe them a duty of care

⁵ www.everychildmatters.gov.uk

⁶ Process of protecting children from abuse or neglect, preventing impairment of their health and development, and ensuring they are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care that enables them to have optimum life chances... Working Together to Safeguard Children: 2006 HM Government

1.2. What to do if you are worried a child is being abused⁷

Everyone working with children and young people should be familiar with local procedures and protocols for safeguarding the welfare of children and young people. Adults have a duty to report any child protection or welfare concerns to a designated member of staff in their organisation and/or report any concerns to the local social care office. Anyone who has concerns or is in doubt should refer to the document 'What To Do If You're Worried a Child Is Being Abused' and follow that guidance.

⁷ What to do If You are Worried a Child is Being Abused HM Government 2006

2. USING THE GUIDANCE

2.1. Status of Document

This guidance document was commissioned by the Department for Children, Schools and Families. (DCSF). It is intended to supplement but not replace or take priority over advice or codes of conduct produced by employers or national bodies.

This is a generic document that should complement existing professional procedures, protocols and guidance which relate to specific roles, responsibilities or professional practices.

2.2. Purpose of Guidance

It is important that all adults working with children understand that the nature of their work and the responsibilities related to it, place them in a position of trust. This practice guidance provides clear advice on appropriate and safe behaviours for all adults working with children in paid or unpaid capacities, in all settings and in all contexts. The guidance aims to:

- keep children safe by clarifying which behaviours constitute safe practice and which behaviours should be avoided;
- assist adults working with children to work safely and responsibly and to monitor their own standards and practice;
- support managers and employers in setting clear expectations of behaviour and/or codes of practice relevant to the services being provided;

- support employers in giving a clear message that unlawful or unsafe behaviour is unacceptable and that, where appropriate, disciplinary or legal action will be taken;
- support safer recruitment practice;
- minimise the risk of misplaced or malicious allegations made against adults who work with children and young people;
- reduce the incidence of positions of trust being abused or misused.

Employers should be familiar with, and know how to access, their Local Safeguarding Children's Board's policy and procedures for managing allegations against staff.

2.3. Underpinning Principles

- The welfare of the child is paramount.⁸
- It is the responsibility of all adults to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people. This responsibility extends to a duty of care for those adults employed, commissioned or contracted to work with children and young people.
- Adults who work with children are responsible for their own actions and behaviour and should avoid any conduct which would lead any reasonable person to question their motivation and intentions.

- Adults should work and be seen to work, in an open and transparent way.
- The same professional standards should always be applied regardless of culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief and/or sexual identity.
- Adults should continually monitor and review their practice and ensure they follow the guidance contained in this document.

⁸ Children Act 1989

2.4. Definitions

Children and Young People: Throughout this document references are made to “children and young people”. These terms are interchangeable and refer to children who have not yet reached their 18th birthday. This guidance, however also has value for those working with vulnerable adults.

Adults: References to ‘adults’ or ‘volunteers’ refer to any adult who is employed, commissioned or contracted to work with or on behalf of, children and young people, in either a paid or unpaid capacity.

Manager: The term ‘manager’ refers to those adults who have responsibility for managing services including the supervision of employees and/or volunteers at any level.

Employer: The term ‘employer’ refers to the organisation which employs, or contracts to use the services of individuals in pursuit of the goals of that organisation. In the context of this document, the term ‘employer’ is also taken to include ‘employing’ the unpaid services of volunteers.

Safeguarding: Process of protecting children from abuse or neglect, preventing impairment of their health and development, and ensuring they are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care that enables children to have optimum life chances and enter adulthood successfully⁹.

Duty of Care: The duty which rests upon an individual or organisation to ensure that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure the safety of a child or young person involved in any activity or interaction for which that individual or organisation is responsible. Any person in charge of, or working with children and young people in any capacity is considered, both legally and morally to owe them a duty of care.

⁹ Working Together to Safeguard Children 2006. HM Government (WT 2006)

2.5. How to Use the Document

This document is relevant to both individuals and organisations working with or on behalf of children and young people. Where an individual works independently and does not work as part of an organisation references made to the ‘senior manager’ should be taken to refer to parents or those with parenting responsibilities.

Each section provides general guidance about a particular aspect of work undertaken with children and young people with, in the right hand column, specific guidance about which behaviours should be avoided and which are recommended. Some organisations may need to adapt or add to the guidance to meet their specific practices or contexts, The document has however, been written for a generic audience and most, if not all of the content, is applicable to all adults who work with children and young people. The diagram in Appendix 1 illustrates how the guidance could be used as a basis for developing specific agency guidance. Appendix 2 provides a visual framework for understanding how the document fits with safer recruitment and selection

and procedures and those which relate to disciplinary proceedings.

It is recommended that organisations and settings who provide services for children and young people use this guidance to develop and promote safer working practice by ensuring that all employees and volunteers are made aware of its contents and have access to it.

Incorporating the use of this document in recruitment and selection processes will help to prevent and deter unsuitable people from working with children and young people. Providing employees and volunteers with clear guidance on appointment and revisiting this through induction, supervision, performance management, training programmes etc, will also help to ensure a safer children’s workforce. Employers and managers will be better placed to deal with unsuitable or inappropriate behaviour if their expectations have been made clear and reinforced throughout a person’s employment and there is evidence that this has been done.

Individuals should follow this guidance in their day to day practice. It should also be referred to when taking on new work, different duties or additional responsibilities.