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[Department
for Education](#)

Guidance

Using after-school clubs, tuition and community activities

Updated 19 September 2023

Applies to England

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Overview

This guidance is for parents and carers. It explains what school and activities clubs, tutors and coaches should be doing to provide a safe environment for the children^{[\[footnote 1\]](#)} that attend their setting. Settings could include:

- community activities - for example, youth clubs
- before- and after-school clubs
- holiday clubs
- supplementary schools - for example, language, cultural and religious
- private tuition
- music lessons
- sports training and coaching

A typical provider may be:

- a tutor who works alone from their home
- a coach who runs training sessions in a sports field for children
- a club with volunteers or paid staff members

There is no single legal framework that governs how clubs and activities for children operate. Although these settings offer provision for children, their staff members and volunteers are not typically inspected, overseen or assessed by any regulatory organisation.

This means that when choosing a club, tutor or coach for your child, it's important to:

- ask questions
- check the [policies](#) and insurance they have in place

You should feel able to ask questions about the provider's activities and policies. A well-run and trustworthy provider will welcome questions. They should be willing to give this kind of information to anyone who leaves a child in their care.

To satisfy yourself that it is a safe environment, you may wish to:

- meet the providers before your child attends a first session
- ask providers if you can meet with them during a session

If a provider is going to be working on a one-to-one basis with your child (such as in the case of a private tutor), you may wish to supervise sessions.

Raising concerns about a club, tutor or coach

If you have concerns about a club or activity your child attends, first raise concerns with the provider.

All providers should have a clear policy to deal with complaints. This should include instructions on:

- how to raise a concern
- who to raise a concern to
- how they will deal with the concern

The complaints policy should be on the provider's website or displayed clearly in the building where the club or activity takes place.

Ask to see a provider's child-protection policy. This should say how:

- children can report concerns

- the provider will make parents aware of any concerns

Individuals such as tutors should give you instructions on how to raise a concern with your local council.

You may also be able to raise your complaint or concern with a governing body or association (if they have one).

If the complaint is about a provider registered as a charity, you can raise this with the [Charity Commission](#).

If the situation is not resolved, escalate safeguarding issues by:

- calling the NSPCC helpline on 0808 800 5000
- contacting the local authority designated officer at [your local council](#)

The local authority designated officer is responsible for dealing with allegations against people who work with children.

! If you believe a child is in immediate danger of harm, call the police on 999.

Choosing a suitable club, tutor or coach

To help you choose a safe out-of-school setting for your child, this section includes:

- a list of things you should check when choosing a provider
- questions you may wish to ask a provider
- warning signs you may wish to look out for when choosing a provider

Questions you may wish to ask your chosen provider

Ask the provider:

- for their complaints policy

- who the lead person responsible for safeguarding children is, checking:
 - what training they have had
 - how recent the training was
- for their child protection policy
- who is in charge of first aid
- if you need to complete a parental consent and emergency details form
- how they securely store any information they hold about your child, checking:
 - who has access to this information
 - if they'll share it with anyone
- how they recruit staff and volunteers
- what checks they undertake to make sure staff and volunteers are suitable to work with children
- what training staff have had
- if any other adults will be present while your child is there, and if so, how regularly
- if they'll allow your child to access to the internet unsupervised
- how they help children with special educational needs or disabilities
- how they help children with personal care needs such as:
 - using the toilet
 - changing
 - feeding
 - taking their medication

Some of the questions will not be relevant to all providers. Answers may vary depending on the size and type of provision.

For example, we would not expect a private piano tutor who does not employ any staff to have written step-by-step child protection procedures.

However, we would expect them to have a written child protection policy. They should be able to explain to you in detail what action they would take if faced with a safeguarding issue.

Before your child's first session

Before the first session, check the provider has:

- a health and safety policy (large providers^[footnote 2] should have a written policy)
- a safe and clean environment - for example, a well-maintained building with a clear exit route in case of emergencies
- a first-aid kit available and a person appointed to be responsible for first-aid
- processes in place in case of a fire or emergency
- qualified (to the appropriate level) staff members and volunteers
- public liability insurance
- run [Disclosure and Barring Service](#) (DBS)^[footnote 3] checks on staff and volunteers
- a child protection policy on safeguarding children and an appointed [designated safeguarding lead](#)
- a code of conduct for staff, volunteers and children, as well as for anyone visiting the premises
- a clear process for raising concerns and making complaints
- an online safety policy regardless of whether children have access to online material at a setting
- if appropriate, an affiliation to a governing body such as:
 - the Football Association
 - British Gymnastics
 - Girlguiding
 - the National Tutoring Association

Warning signs to look out for

If you spot any warning signs when asking the provider questions, or when visiting the setting, consider:

- sending your child elsewhere
- reporting any safeguarding concerns to the local authority designated officer

You should report serious incidents by:

- calling the police
- calling the NSPCC helpline on 0808 800 5000
- contacting the local authority designated officer at [your local council](#)

Warning signs include:

- little or no consideration for health and safety, including general lack of awareness of the risks and how to reduce them
- evidence of a dangerous environment, for example:
 - loose wires
 - damp
 - no clear emergency exit route
 - no first-aid kit
- lack of awareness of what to do in case of a fire or an emergency
- no appointed person responsible for first aid
- the provider does not have clear steps for how you can report concerns, and how they'll make parents aware of concerns
- no appointed designated safeguarding lead
- signs of abuse on other children who attend the setting - for example, unexplained bruises
- there are unknown adults in the setting
- there do not seem to be enough staff or volunteers to supervise all the children in their care
- adults having unsupervised one-to-one contact with children without parental or carer consent
- no internet safety policy in place or monitored access to the internet
- parents are not asked to complete and sign a consent form
- no process in place for dealing with complaints

Warning signs relating to providers with staff members, include:

- staff have not completed relevant training or checks (for example, DBS checks)
- staff or volunteers appear not to acknowledge potential safeguarding concerns
- staff and volunteers do not know what to do if they have a child protection concern (for example, if a child makes a disclosure about abuse)

Policies providers should have

Any club or organisation working with children or young people has a responsibility to keep them safe. As a minimum, providers should have policies on:

- safeguarding and child protection
- the suitability of all staff and volunteers
- health and safety

Safeguarding and child protection

All providers should have a clear set of guidelines on how they will keep children safe and respond to child protection concerns. A copy should be available on their website or given to you on request.

At a minimum, the policy should include:

- how they will keep children and young people safe
- a commitment that under no circumstances should any staff member or volunteer inflict physical or psychological harm on a child
- how they would handle specific safeguarding issues - if this is not written down, they should be able to verbally describe this
- details of the person responsible for keeping children in the club or activity safe and how to contact them
- contact details for local safeguarding services such as the local council and the police
- contact details for any relevant governing body and or association (if they have one)
- any additional guidance, information or expectations that you need to be aware of

Every provider should have a lead person who is responsible for safeguarding children in the setting. In this guidance, we refer to this person as the designated safeguarding lead. A lone provider will be the designated safeguarding lead.

Suitability of all staff and volunteers

If the provider has staff members or volunteers, they should also be able to provide you with a written document explaining how they deal with:

- concerns that a child may be at risk of abuse
- child-on-child abuse (for example, bullying)

- allegations or concerns that staff members or volunteers may present a risk of abuse
- complaints and safeguarding concerns

Providers with staff members should also be able to provide you with:

- a staff behaviour policy (sometimes called a staff code of conduct) that should include information on:
 - how they deal with allegations against staff
 - whistleblowing procedures
 - acceptable use of technologies (including the use of mobile devices)
 - staff and pupil relationships
 - communications, including the use of social media
- information on how staff will respond directly to a child who discloses abuse

Health and safety

Providers should be able to name an appointed person in charge of first aid. They should also:

- be able to tell you what first-aid training this appointed person has had
- let you know that they have a first-aid kit available
- have carried out a risk assessment to identify what could cause injury or illness in their setting
- follow the guidance on:
 - [health protection in schools and other childcare facilities](#)
 - [living safely with respiratory infections](#)

Parental consent and emergency details form

For each child attending their setting, providers should collect:

- at least one emergency contact number for the parent or carer (but ideally more than one)
- their parent's full name

- the child's home address

You should share any medical concerns or allergies your child may have.

Providers might collect the information through an electronic or printed form. If your child attends the club or activity for more than a year, they should ask you for updated information.

Data protection

The provider should be able to explain how they store information about your child. If they are storing it electronically, they should password protect and encrypt it. If they are storing paper copies, they should secure it in a locked container.

Only the designated safeguarding lead, or someone senior and trusted in the organisation, should have access.

Aside from for safeguarding purposes, providers should not give this information to other parties without your child's consent (and your consent if your child is under 13).

Online safety

If a setting provides internet connectivity or internet-connected devices, they should be able to show you:

- their online safety policy
- an acceptable use statement (which could be part of the child protection policy)

This should outline examples of what behaviour is acceptable online for children and staff.

The misuse of technology plays a significant part in safeguarding issues. Providers should be able to identify and intervene in incidents where appropriate.

The provider should have age-appropriate filtering and monitoring systems that protect them from:

- inappropriate or harmful material such as pornography, or racist, radical or extremist views
- harmful online interactions with other users such as in chatrooms, where adults can pose as children or young people

Consider checking if your child will have access to the internet from their own devices via 3G, 4G or 5G or public wi-fi. A provider's filtering and monitoring systems would not cover these devices and networks.

Staff and volunteers

All providers should have procedures in place to prevent unsuitable people from working or volunteering at their club or activity.

There is no single check that can be undertaken to show that a volunteer or staff member is suitable to work with children. Providers should be able to give you details of:

- the range of checks that they have done to reassure you that your child is safe in the care of their staff and volunteers
- their staff behaviour policy, which describes the standard of acceptable behaviour for staff and volunteers
- how they review and monitor the performance of staff to make sure they continue to have the necessary skills and training to carry out their role

There are many checks providers can make to see if a person is suitable to work with children. This includes checking:

- a person's identity and that they're allowed to work in the UK before employing them
- references to get independent and factual information before appointing a volunteer or staff member
- if prospective volunteers or employees have a criminal record (DBS checks)

They should also check that prospective volunteers or employees have the right skill set. For example, in most sports, the head coach should have at least a level 2 qualification in the appropriate discipline.

Check with your provider to find out if staff members and volunteers have:

- the relevant training to understand:
 - the types of abuse
 - what to look out for
 - how to deal with child protection issues such as physical, emotional or sexual abuse
- completed relevant qualifications and checks (for example, pre-employment references and DBS checks)
- clear roles and responsibilities

Positions of trust

Those who carry out certain activities in a sport or religious setting are particularly influential over a child's development. Both situations also have very high levels of trust, influence, power and authority. These figures are well established, trusted and respected in the community. We classify these roles as 'positions of trust'.



It is an offence for a person over the age of 18 to enter into a sexual relationship, or engage in certain other sexual activities, with a young person (aged under 18) where they knowingly coach, teach, train, supervise or instruct them on a regular basis in a sport or a religious setting.

Training for staff

Training will differ according to the type of provider. All staff should be suitably trained in:

- health and safety
- safeguarding (including online)
- child protection

Providers should be able to tell you what training the staff have done and how recently.

Designated safeguarding lead

The provider should be able to name the person responsible for safeguarding children in the club or activity. We refer to this person as the designated safeguarding lead.

A designated safeguarding lead should have a good understanding of specific safeguarding issues. This includes:

- abuse in intimate personal relationships between children
- bullying (including cyberbullying)
- physical abuse
- neglect
- emotional abuse
- harmful sexual behaviour, which can include:
 - inappropriate sexual language, such as name-calling or sexual comments
 - consensual or non-consensual sharing of nude or semi-nude images or videos
 - accessing age-inappropriate sexual material online
 - sexual activity without consent
 - sexual violence, such as rape or sexual assault
 - upskirting^[footnote 4]
- activities involving harassment, abuse or humiliation used as a way of initiating a person into a group
- extremism and radicalisation
- child protection
- what abuse and neglect look like
- the referral processes into the local council children's social care team
- what to expect when they make a referral to children's social care
- online safety
- substance abuse

The designated safeguarding lead should have had training that gives them the knowledge and skills they need for their role. They should repeat the training at frequent intervals or if the provider's circumstances change.

DBS checks

The Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) issues criminal record certificates. These help providers decide on the suitability of staff, especially when working with children. There are different levels of [DBS check](#) depending on the type of work or activities.

If your provider works on their own, check if they have undertaken a DBS check. If so, ask them to supply evidence of this. A self-employed person can apply for a basic DBS check.

If the provider works from home, check if any other adults will be present. If these adults are staff or volunteers, consider asking if they have been DBS checked. You may also wish to ask for their names, and whether they will be in the room alone with your child at any point.

Child sex offender disclosure scheme

Find out if a person who has contact with your child [has a record for child sexual offences](#). The police will reveal details if:

- the person has convictions for sexual offences against children
- the person poses a risk of causing harm to the child concerned
- a disclosure is necessary to protect the child

Special educational needs (SEN) or a disability

Being able to access after-school clubs, tuition and community activities is vital for children with SEN or a disability. They can help with:

- education
- social engagement
- physical development
- the growth of other important life skills

The Equality Act 2010 requires providers to make sure they do not discriminate on the grounds of disability. This includes admissions. It means providers must take

reasonable steps to make sure children with SEND can take part in their activities. They should make extra considerations to safeguard these children.

Make sure you describe your child's needs in full. This will help the provider to understand how they may need to care for, and respond to, your child. You should always make sure that you understand what the provider can and can't do. The provider may not always be able to cope with your child's personal care needs, for example.

Consider asking if they have a trained member of staff to work with children who have SEN or disabilities. There may be situations where the provider may not have the full range of skills, facilities or resources required to meet an individual child's SEN and disability needs. They should discuss this with you. If you're not satisfied:

- ask follow-up questions
- consider contacting your local council's family information service

We expect local councils to signpost parents to their family information service. Your local council's family information service will:

- provide information such as:
 - local services and activities available to you and your family
 - other sources of advice and support
- explain what the SEND local offer is in your area
- offer support to children and young people with disabled parents

-
1. 'Children' refers to people who have not yet reached their 18th birthday. [↩](#)
 2. If a provider has fewer than 5 employees, they do not need to have a written health and safety risk assessment. [↩](#)
 3. DBS checks are criminal record checks provided by the Disclosure and Barring Service. They were previously known as Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks. [↩](#)
 4. Upskirting typically refers to the practice of taking a picture under a person's clothing without them knowing. In England and Wales, upskirting is a criminal offence under the Voyeurism Act. [↩](#)

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