Department for Education

Guidance

Sharing information with safeguarding partners

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Applies to England

Contents

Your setting's role in safeguarding
Sharing information
What to expect from partners
Families First Partnership programme
Serious violence duty

Preventing and responding to serious violence relies on clear, coordinated work with safeguarding and community partners.

This page distinguishes between:

- information that settings must share because of a legal duty
- information that settings should share, where necessary and proportionate, to protect a child
- local partnership arrangements that may vary by area

Your setting’s role in safeguarding

Schools and colleges are part of local safeguarding arrangements. You should know who your local partners are and how to contact them and share information with them.

This includes knowing how to contact your:

- local safeguarding partnership
- children’s social care front door or multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH)
- police safer schools or neighbourhood contacts, where available
- any local youth, violence reduction or family help services that can provide advice or support

Safeguarding partners may share information with you, request information from you, or invite you to meetings where a child’s safety is being considered.

Schools are not statutory partners under the Serious violence duty, but may be consulted where partners need insight on local risks.

Sharing information

Schools and colleges must share information where it is necessary to safeguard or promote the welfare of a child. Information sharing must be lawful, proportionate and in line with the Information sharing duty. It can include details about another individual if that information is relevant to understanding or responding to risks affecting a child.

A designated safeguarding lead (DSL) should oversee all decisions about what to share and follow local information sharing protocols or data sharing agreements.

What to expect from partners

You can expect partners to:

- respond to referrals based on local thresholds
- share relevant information where it supports a child's safety, for example where the police notify the school or local authority about a child's contact with the police that may indicate risk or vulnerability
- request contextual insight (such as information about peer groups, attendance patterns or locations) where this supports assessment and planning

Families First Partnership programme

The Families First Partnership programme is non-statutory guidance that sets out expectations of safeguarding partnerships to implement reforms to:

- family help
- multi-agency child protection
- Family Group Decision Making
- Family Network Support Packages

The programme aims to help more children and families stay together safely by focusing on providing:

- more intensive, earlier help for families
- more expert child protection
- greater use of family networks
- families and children access to better local support services

Serious violence duty

Under the serious violence duty, schools and other educational authorities must collaborate with specified authorities if requested to do so. They can also request to participate in local partnership arrangements, in which case the specified authorities are required to collaborate with them. Educational authorities must also be consulted in the preparation of the local serious violence strategy.

In addition, schools may share proportionate information or insight if it could support assessment of local need. This includes local policing bodies (Police and Crime Commissioners or equivalents) being able to request information as part of their monitoring and oversight function and which equally applies to schools. These requests must be complied with providing they are in line with existing data protection requirements.

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