



*School Governors  
Handbook  
Safeguarding and  
Child Protection*

*This handbook has been developed by the Child Protection Support Service for Schools and the Department of Education*

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## Index

1. Introduction
2. The Law in Northern Ireland
3. Guidance, Policy and Procedures that help you understand the Law
4. What does this mean for you as a School Governor?
5. Who is who in the Safeguarding Team?
6. Safeguarding and Child Protection Support Services
7. What should your Child Protection Policy include?
8. What is the Role of the Education & Training Inspectorate (ETI)
9. Child Protection Training for School Governors
10. Where do I get help?

## 1. INTRODUCTION

***“In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be of primary consideration”***

### **Article 3 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child**

This handbook is intended to assist school governors in fulfilling their statutory responsibilities regarding their safeguarding and child protection role, in order to promote clarity and consistency of approach in all schools.

Recent public enquiries into child death and child abuse have highlighted the need for everyone to take responsibility for safeguarding and protecting children. In addition it is necessary for those in key positions to have a clear understanding of their role in adhering to policy and procedures.

Awareness of the public and schools’ staff in matters relating to child abuse continues to grow in light of lessons learned from high profile cases of child abuse, and a context of living in a digital world. Legislation, guidance and policy have developed in response to this growing awareness and high priority is now given to the safeguarding and child protection role of schools.

In recognition of the key role that school plays in the life of a child, school governors and managers of schools must ensure that safeguarding systems are tailored to the needs of their pupil population, and that all children and young people *feel* safe in this environment.

This handbook outlines the key safeguarding and child protection legislative, policy and guidance context in education. It explains what this means for you as a governor, and identifies the key safeguarding and child protection professionals in a school setting.

**Safeguarding** Effective safeguarding begins with *preventing* harm occurring through early identification of risk and appropriate, timely intervention. A safeguarding school culture is a child-centred one that *promotes* the welfare of all pupils. It includes support to families and early intervention to meet the needs of children, and continues through to *protecting* children from harm when this is required.

**Child Protection** is a part of safeguarding and promoting welfare. This refers to the activity that is undertaken to protect *specific* children who are suffering or likely to suffer, significant harm.

A child in need of protection is a child who is at risk of, or likely to suffer, significant harm which can be attributed to a person or persons or organisation, either by an act of commission or omission.

## 2. THE LAW IN NORTHERN IRELAND

There is a broad range of international and domestic legislation relating to child welfare and protection.

*The Children (NI) Order 1995* is the overarching piece of legislation setting out the requirements for professional practice in relation to children and young people. It is the most comprehensive and far reaching child care legislation ever introduced to Northern Ireland. It clearly identifies the welfare of the child as being of paramount importance and sets **Prevention and Protection** as two of the five key principles.

*The Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 2003* places a statutory duty on Boards of Governors to:

- Safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils
- Have a written child protection policy
- Specifically address the prevention of bullying in school discipline policies

This is the legislation relating specifically to Boards of Governors. It may be helpful for all governors to have access to a copy of Articles 17, 18 and 19. See DE website <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/circular-200313-welfare-and-protection-pupils-education-and-libraries-ni-order-2003>

*The Safeguarding Board Act (Northern Ireland) 2011* places interagency co-operation on a statutory footing, makes arrangements to promote the welfare of children and directs agencies to supply information to the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland (SBNI) under certain conditions. It established SBNI, launched in September 2012. The objective of the SBNI is to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people in NI by coordinating and ensuring the effectiveness of what is done by each person or body represented on the board. [www.safeguardingni.org](http://www.safeguardingni.org)

*Children's Service Co-operation Act (Northern Ireland) 2015* requires co-operation among certain public authorities and other persons in order to contribute to the well-being of children and young persons.

School governors are obligated to acknowledge and work within the relevant guidance and procedural documents that have been produced by the Department of Education (DE) and the Department of Health (DoH).

### 3. GUIDANCE, POLICY AND PROCEDURES TO HELP YOU UNDERSTAND THE LAW RELATING TO SAFEGUARDING AND CHILD PROTECTION

- **Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young people in NI (DHSSPS 2016)**  
This provides the revised policy position on safeguarding and child protection arrangements in Northern Ireland. It sets out how agencies should co-operate to promote children's welfare and to protect them from abuse and/or neglect.
- **Area Child Protection Committees' - Regional Policy and Procedures (2005) and Amendments (2008)**  
This was written to reflect the changes in thinking and practice contained in 'Co-operating to Safeguard 2003'. This document sets out the procedures to be followed by all agencies working in the child protection environment.  
*This policy document is currently under review to reflect the revised policy document above.*
- **Pastoral Care in Schools: Child Protection (DENI 1999)**  
This is a key guidance document for schools on the management of safeguarding and child protection issues in a school setting. It is supplemented by all subsequent DE Circulars and letters recorded below.  
*This document is currently under review by the DE.*
- **Stopping Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse in Northern Ireland. A Seven year Strategy 2013 – 2020, and subsequent action plans.**

#### **Safeguarding and Child Protection: DE Circulars**

- **Circular 1999/10**  
Guidance for schools on child protection policy and procedures
- **Circular 2003/13**  
Guidance for schools on the Welfare and Protection of Pupils Education and Libraries (NI) Order 2003
- **Circular 2006/06**  
Guidance on safer recruitment practices for education authorities
- **Circular 2006/08**  
Guidance for schools on the requirement for child protection training in relation to interviewing and selection panel
- **Circular 2007/01**  
Acceptable use of the internet and digital technologies in schools

- **Circular 2008/10**  
From 1st August 2008 substitute teachers must be booked on line via NISTR
- **Circular 2010/01** Guidance on Relationships & Sexuality Education (RSE):  
Eliminating Sexual Orientation Discrimination in NI
- **Circular 2010/18**  
“Every School a Good School” – the Governors’ Role
- **Circular 2011/22**  
Internet Safety (addendum to 2007/01).
- **Circular 2012/18**  
Replaces Circular 2010/07. Pupil Attendance: Absence Recording by  
Schools
- **Circular 2012/19**  
Disclosure and barring arrangements: changes to pre-employment vetting  
checks for volunteers working in schools from 10 September 2012
- **Circular 2013/01**  
Disclosure and barring arrangements. Guidance for Schools and employing  
authorities on pre-employment vetting checking and safer recruitment  
practices
- **Circular 2013/16**  
Relationship and sexuality education policy in schools.
- **Circular 2013/25**  
eSafety Guidance
- **Circular 2014/14**  
Guidance on how to encourage pupil participation in decision making in  
schools
- **DE Circular 2014/27**  
Managing Information on Persons Who Pose a Risk to Pupils
- **DE Circular 2015/13**  
Dealing with Allegations of Abuse against a Member of Staff
- **DE Circular 2015/22**  
Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE)
- **DE Circular 2015/23**  
Drugs Guidance
- **DE Circular 2016/05**  
Children who Display Harmful Sexualised Behaviour
- **DE Circular 2016/20**  
Child Protection: Record keeping in Schools

- **DE Circular 2016/26**  
Effective Educational Uses of Mobile Digital Devices
- **DE Circular 2016/27**  
Online Safety

## **Letters from DE**

### **February 2009**

Child Protection: Legislation Changes to Age of Consent

### **June 2009**

Provision of free school meals on humanitarian grounds

### **May 2012**

Revised criterion for the provision of free school meals on humanitarian grounds

### **November 2013**

Concussion and Sudden Impact Syndrome

### **July 2014**

Multi-Agency Practice Guidelines on Female Genital Mutilation

### **September 2014**

Disposal of Child Protection Records. Letter to Principals.

### **October 2014**

Child Sexual Exploitation – key messages.

### **June 2015**

Inappropriate use of the internet and mobile technologies. Advice for pupils, parents and staff.

### **June 2015**

Preventing Child Sexual Exploitation.

### **September 2015**

SBNI leaflet “Sexting and the Law”

### **September 2016**

DE Guidance on Child Protection: Record keeping in Schools; Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young people in NI, DHSSPS 2016

**New and updated guidance in relation to safeguarding and child protection including DE circulars and letters can be found using the following DE web page link:**

<http://www.deni.gov.uk/index/support-and-development-2/child-protection-safeguarding.htm>

#### 4. WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR YOU AS A SCHOOL GOVERNOR?

A Board of Governors must ensure that:

- A Designated Governor for child protection is appointed.
- A Designated Teacher and Deputy Designated Teacher for Child Protection are appointed in their schools.
- They have a full understanding of the roles of the Designated and Deputy Designated Teachers for Child Protection.
- Safeguarding and child protection training has been given to all staff.
- The school has a Child Protection Policy which is reviewed annually; and parents and pupils receive a copy of the child protection policy and complaints procedure every 2 years.
- The school ensures that all safeguarding policies are reviewed at least every 2-3 years.
- There is a code of conduct for all adults working in the school (whether paid or unpaid)
- All school staff and volunteers are vetted, as appropriate, and inducted in the school's child protection policy.
- The governors receive a full report on all child protection matters, at least annually (it is best practice that they receive a termly report of child protection activities).
- The Record of Child Abuse Complaints (allegations against staff) is made available to them at least annually.
- The school maintains secure records of:
  - Child protection concerns
  - Disclosures of abuse
  - Complaints against staff
  - Staff induction and training

NB: Governors of schools that are involved in initiatives such as Extended Schools, Full Service Schools, or Boarding Departments, must ensure that the implications for safeguarding their pupils in the extended environment are fully addressed and included in the school's child protection policy.



## **5. WHO IS WHO IN THE SAFEGUARDING TEAM?**

It is important to acknowledge that all adults working in the school have a responsibility to promote and safeguard the welfare of children.

Within the school setting there are key governors and staff who are delegated with enhanced responsibility for child protection.

### **5. 1 School Safeguarding Team**

In the best interests of the children, and as a support for the Designated Teachers, the school should establish a *Safeguarding Team*. This team should include the Chair of the Board of Governors, the Designated Governor for Child Protection, the Principal (as Chair), the Designated Teacher and the Deputy Designated Teacher. The team may co-opt other members as required to help address specific issues e.g. IT lead.

The Child Protection Support Service for Schools (CPSSS) provides child protection training in relation to the specific responsibilities of each member of the Safeguarding Team.

The role of the Safeguarding Team includes;

- The monitoring and periodic review of safeguarding and child protection arrangements and systems in the school
- Support for the Designated/Deputy Designated Teacher in the exercise of their child protection responsibilities.

#### **5.1.1 Chair of Board of Governors**

The Education and Libraries (NI) Order 2003, Part IV 'Welfare and Protection of Pupils' places a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of all pupils on the Board of Governors.

The Chairperson of the Board of Governors plays a pivotal role in contributing to the creation and maintenance of a safeguarding ethos within the school environment.

In the event of a child protection complaint/allegation/concern being raised about the Principal, it is the Chairperson who takes the lead responsibility for managing such a complaint/allegation/concern - in keeping with DE Guidance and the school's policy and procedures.

### **5.1.2 Designated Governor for Child Protection**

The Board of Governors delegates a specific member of the governing body to take the lead in child protection/safeguarding governance issues in order to be able to advise the governors on:

- The role of the designated teacher
- The content of safeguarding and child protection policies
- The content of a code of conduct for adults within the school
- The content of termly updates and Annual Child Protection Report

### **5.1.3 School Principal**

The school Principal has the delegated responsibility for establishing and managing the safeguarding systems within the school. This includes the appointment and management of suitable staff to the Designated and Deputy Designated Teacher posts, and ensuring that no adult begins to work with pupils unless they have been inducted in the school safeguarding and child protection policies (including the Code of Conduct for Adults).

The Principal must ensure that parents and pupils receive a copy of the Child Protection Policy and Complaints Procedures every 2 years. This could include an abbreviated version of the full policy.

The Principal, as Secretary to the Board of Governors, has the responsibility of making sure that the Board of Governors is informed of any changes to guidance, procedure or legislation relating to safeguarding and child protection. As chair of the school Safeguarding Team, the principal may ensure termly inclusion of child protection activities on the governor agenda.

The Principal also takes the lead in managing safeguarding/child protection concerns relating to staff.

### **5.1.4 Designated Teacher for Child Protection**

Every school is required to have a Designated and Deputy Designated Teacher with responsibility for child protection. This is a highly skilled role, developed and supported through training and support from the CPSSS. The role requires knowledge, skills and professional judgement on complex and emotive issues. It involves working together to:

- Induct all adults working in the school, whether they are paid or unpaid (*before* they first meet pupils).

- Train all adults working in the school in safeguarding and child protection (including governors)
- Be available to discuss safeguarding or child protection concerns of any member of staff.
- Take responsibility for secure record keeping of all child protection concerns.
- Make referral to Social Services Gateway Team or PSNI Central Referral Unit as appropriate.
- Liaise with the EA Designated Officers for Child Protection.
- Keep the school principal informed of any child protection concerns.
- Take the lead responsibility for the development of the school's child protection policy.
- Contribute to the promotion a safeguarding ethos in the school.
- Compile reports to the Board of Governors regarding Child Protection and relevant safeguarding issues.

***The Annual Child Protection Report to Governors*** will provide a report on the schools child protection/safeguarding arrangements and may include the following headings;

- **Child Protection/Safeguarding Activity e.g.**
  - (i) number of concerns of abuse
  - (ii) number of complaints of a child protection nature against staff
  - (iii) number of referrals to Social Services/PSNI
  - (v) number of children on the child protection register (known to the school)

No identifying details of any case should be shared.

- **Child Protection Training e.g.**
  - Designated / Deputy Designated Teacher
  - Principal
  - Governor
  - Whole School Training
- **Policy Reviews / Updates**
- **Safeguarding Initiatives**

### **5.1.5 Deputy Designated Teacher for Child Protection**

The role of the Deputy Designated Teacher for Child Protection is to actively support the Designated Teacher in fulfilling his/her responsibilities.

It is important that the Deputy Designated Teacher works *in partnership* with the Designated Teacher so that he/she develops sufficient knowledge and experience to undertake the duties of the Designated Teacher as required. Deputy Designated Teachers are also provided with the same specialist training by CPSSS to support them in their role.

Schools may have more than one Deputy Designated Teacher depending on their size, location (e.g. split site schools), and the presence of an additional provision such as a nursery unit, speech and language unit, boarding department or other provision.

## **6. SAFEGUARDING AND CHILD PROTECTION SUPPORT SERVICES**

### **6.1 Child Protection Support Service for Schools (CPSSS)**

The CPSSS has been operational as a regional support service for schools since April 2006. It currently lies within the EA Children and Young Peoples' Directorate. There are 5 local offices across NI.

The CPSSS is comprised of Designated Officers for Child Protection whose primary role is to provide advice, support and training to Designated Teachers for Child Protection (DTs), their Deputies (DDTs), Principals, and Governors in relation to their safeguarding and child protection responsibilities. This includes the provision of:

- A daily telephone helpline to advise, guide and support DTs, DDTs, and Principals in relation to concerns about individual children, and on wider policy and training matters.
- Initial, refresher and cluster group training.
- Support visits to schools where required.
- Advice and guidance on the assessment and management of children with harmful sexualised behaviour.
- Dissemination of new information on training, DE circulars and guidance.
- Support in developing or reviewing the school's child protection policy.
- Follow up to ETI inspections where child protection/safeguarding is identified as an area for improvement.

In addition, the CPSSS:

- Offers training to the Chairperson and Designated Governor for Child Protection in relation to their statutory child protection/safeguarding responsibilities.

- Offers support, training and advice to other services within the Education Authority.
- Assists EA Human Resource managers in dealing with allegations of abuse against teachers and other EA officers/employees
- Liaises with Social Services and PSNI where appropriate.
- Represents the education sector at multi-agency fora.

The CPSSS has responsibility for the:

- Approval and granting of work permits for children in employment.
- Approval and granting of performance licences for children of statutory school age (and under) who are involved in entertainment. This includes guidance to production companies regarding their responsibilities under the Children (NI) Order 1995 (Articles 137-148) and the Children (Public Performances) Regulations (NI) 1996.
- Approval, licensing and training of chaperones for children involved in entertainment.

## **6.2 Other Education Authority Services**

The School Development Service (SDS) provides training and support for Governors in relation to their management roles. This includes induction training and recruitment and selection training, both of which make reference to the safeguarding and child protection responsibilities of Governors.

All Education Authority services and staff share a global responsibility to follow the EANI Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and Procedures.

## **6.3 Human Resources**

Employing authorities and governing bodies - e.g. Education Authority NI (EANI), Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS), Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education (NICIE), Governing Bodies Association (GBA), provide advice to their member schools on specific employment issues such as recruitment and selection, use of disciplinary procedures etc.

## 7. WHAT SHOULD YOUR CHILD PROTECTION POLICY INCLUDE?

A school's Child Protection Policy must be a 'living document' providing a secure framework within which all staff work. It reflects the values to which the school community is committed and demonstrates how the school is fulfilling its statutory responsibilities in safeguarding children. Each school should develop their policy in order to address the needs of their specific school community. The school policy should include:

- The school's child safeguarding ethos
- Definitions and potential signs and symptoms of abuse including child sexual exploitation and domestic violence
- The roles of the Designated and Deputy Designated Teachers, (naming who holds the roles)
- The reporting process for Child Protection concerns:
  - i. who to report to
  - ii. what to record
- The reporting process for safeguarding/child protection concerns about school staff or volunteers
- How a parent can raise a concern about child protection/safeguarding.
- The school's safe recruitment measures
- A code of conduct for all staff and volunteers
- The school's approach to "The Preventative Curriculum"
- Reference to other safeguarding policies e.g. safe handling, intimate care, educational visits, digital safeguarding, anti-bullying, whistleblowing
- Specific issues e.g. extended school activity, boarding department etc

The child protection policy must be reviewed *annually*, and a copy shared with parents every 2 years. It should be acknowledged that the child protection policy is one of a suite of policies reflecting that safeguarding takes place across all aspects of school life.

## 8. WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE EDUCATION TRAINING INSPECTORATE (ETI)?

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) provides inspection services for the Department of Education, the Department of Culture, Arts & Leisure and the Department for Employment & Learning. Within the Inspectorate, particular inspectors carry out specific roles.

A District Inspector has responsibility for a group of organisations within sectors, the pre-school sector, primary schools, post-primary schools, colleges of further education, training organisations and youth organisations.

The Chair of the Board of Governors is notified when an inspection is announced. An Inspector surveys pupil welfare/safeguarding arrangements within the school, of which some will relate specifically to child protection.

An ETI safeguarding proforma\* is sent to the school prior to the inspection visit. It is intended to establish the extent to which your school complies with child protection/safeguarding requirements and how your arrangements reflect best practice in all aspects of safeguarding children and young people. The completed questionnaire forms the basis of discussion about pupil welfare and safeguarding provision, and a copy should be made available to the Inspector at the start of the visit. There are three components:

- Whole Organisation
- Communication and Record Keeping
- Children/Young People and Parents

The Inspectors meet separately with the governors on the first day of the inspection. The Inspector will ask governors questions relating to the safeguarding and child protection systems and processes within their school. An in depth evaluation and report will be provided indicating the ETI findings. A follow-up inspection, if required, will be carried out normally within 18-24 months. If, however, significant pupil welfare or child protection issues are identified during the inspection, a follow-up inspection on these issues will take place within a period of 6-8 weeks.

\*AVAILABLE TO DOWNLOAD ON THE EA WEBSITE:

[HTTP://WWW.EANI.ORG.UK/SCHOOLS/SAFEGUARDING-AND-CHILD-PROTECTION/](http://www.eani.org.uk/schools/safeguarding-and-child-protection/)

## 9. CHILD PROTECTION TRAINING FOR SCHOOL GOVERNORS

Child Protection training for school governors has three specific strands

1. Initial awareness of child protection that is included as part of the induction programme for all governors (delivered by the School Development Service). An overview of child protection is also available to view on ESaGS Educational Television: <http://www.esags.tv/governor-support/child-protection/>
2. Child Protection training from the CPSSS for the Chairperson and Designated Governor for Child Protection, to equip them in assisting the Board of Governors with their child protection governance responsibilities.
3. Training on recruitment, selection and vetting (delivered by EA Human Resources). The Chair of Governors needs to ensure that at least one governor on each interview panel has attended this.

Recommended training for school governors

Who	Strand 1	Strand 2	Strand 3
All school governors	√		
Chair of Governors	√	√	√
Governors who sit on interview teaching appointments' panels ( <i>at least one governor on each panel needs to have attended DE 2006/08</i> )	√		√
Governors who are delegated to take the lead in child protection governance	√	√	√



## 10. WHERE DO I GET HELP?

### **Education Authority Child Protection Support Service for Schools**

Belfast Office: 028 90564289

North Eastern Office: 028 94482223

South Eastern Office: 028 90566216

Southern Office: 028 38341975

Western Office: 028 82411480

### **Resources**

To support the guidance in Circular 99/10 the DE developed the Pastoral Care in Schools: Child Protection resources (booklet and DVD). These resources are available on the DE website:

<https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/topics/support-and-development/child-protection-and-safeguarding>

Further helpful websites:

<http://www.esags.tv/governor-support/child-protection/>

<http://www.eani.org.uk/schools/safeguarding-and-child-protection/>

<http://www.eani.org.uk/schools/school-governors/>