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SAFEGUARDING & CHILD PROTECTION UPDATE



ISSUE: 15 **January 2026**



Welcome to this term's Safeguarding & Child Protection bulletin. We hope you've had a great start to the academic year and enjoyed some well-deserved rest over the festive period. As always, our priority is ensuring the safety and wellbeing of every pupil. This edition focuses on current safeguarding priorities and practical resources to support you in your day-to-day work. We ask that you read this issue of our Safeguarding & Child Protection Update to help supplement and maintain your knowledge as we enter a new term.

Online safety update

Safer Internet Day



Safer Internet Day is the UK's biggest celebration of online safety. Each year Safer Internet Day covers online themes that young people are seeing and experiencing online.

Safer Internet Day is co-ordinated in the UK by the UK Safer Internet Centre in partnership with Childnet.

Safer Internet Day 2026 will take place this year on the 10th of February 2026, with celebrations and learning based around the theme **'Smart tech, safe choices – Exploring the safe and responsible use of AI'.**

AI is more relevant than ever before in our day-to-day lives, and many children and young people are hearing about and using AI online. It's increasingly important that children and young people especially have the skills and knowledge to make safe choices when using this type of technology.

You can find the UK Safer Internet Centre's current recommended resources for teaching online safety **here** https://saferinternet.org.uk/guide-and-resource/teachers-and-school-staff/teaching-resources

We expect that specific resources for Safer Internet Day 2026 will be updated closer to the time, so watch this space.



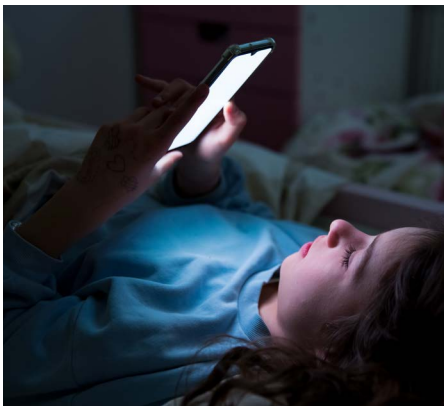
Social Media Platform Focus – Discord

Discord is a popular communication app used by many young people to chat, game and share interests. While it can be a positive creative space, its open chat features also pose safeguarding risks.

Here's what staff should know:

What is Discord?

- A free platform where users join interest-based "servers" to chat by text, voice or video.
- Public servers can expose young people to strangers; private servers are invite-only.
- Direct messaging (DMs) is a core feature and can be used to contact young people privately.



Key Risks

- **Grooming:** Shared interests can make it easy for an adult with harmful intentions to build rapport with a child.
- **Inappropriate or harmful content:** Includes sexualised material, adult humour, bullying, self-harm content or extremist language.
- **Harsh language & bullying:** Real-time chats can expose young users to abusive or discriminatory messages before moderation occurs.

Staff awareness is key in order to help us to support the children and young people we work with. You can find out more information about Discord **here.**

Data security

The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) published a news report in September 2025 which detailed how over a half of school insider cyber-attacks are caused by students.

The report also advises that cyber incidents within schools were often due to poor data protection practices.

You can read the ICO's article in full below:
https://ico.org.uk/about-the-ico/media-centre/news-and-blogs/2025/09/insider-threat-of-students-leading-to-increasing-number-of-cyber-attacks-in-schools/





IT and Data Security Policy

With the above in mind, we include here a quick reminder to ensure that you're familiar with our IT and data security policy for supply staff when carrying out your day-to-day role working with children and young people.

IT and data underpin the key teaching, learning, pastoral and operational functions of a school or educational setting, and similarly they can pose great risk to those functions if appropriate considerations and actions are not undertaken where required.

You can find our guidance below:
https://www.visionforeducation.co.uk/view_pdf/it-and-information-security-policy-for-supply-staff

Sharing information to safeguard children and young people in the education sector in the UK

Please also keep in mind that data protection is not a barrier to sharing information to safeguard children and young people; it gives you a framework to do it in the right way.

The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) has published some guidance to inform those who work in the education sector, and to support them in feeling confident when it is required to share personal information **for safeguarding purposes.**

The guidance explains the data protection aspects of sharing information to safeguard children and young people; it's not a guide to safeguarding practice**.**

https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/uk-gdpr-guidance-and-resources/data-sharing/sharing-information-to-safeguard-children-and-young-people-education-sector/

Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND)



As per data released by the government, there are over 1.7 million pupils with identified Special Educational Needs in England in 2025. This equates to 19.6% of students in the country. It is worth noting that the figure of children who have additional needs but are yet to be identified makes this number even more significant.

The government is looking to set out reforms to SEND in education, to help support the children with additional needs as effectively as possible. These reforms were set to be introduced in autumn 2025 but have since been delayed to early 2026.

When working on supply with children with additional needs, it is crucial to have a comprehensive understanding of their individual needs, so ask staff to inform you of any plans that the children are under, and how to support them so that the pupils can learn effectively.

For further information, please see the government SEND Code of Practice: **https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25**

Wellbeing corner

Making good wellbeing a priority

We know that supply work in schools can be both challenging and rewarding in equal measure. To support you with those challenges, we're excited to give you free access to a new wellbeing app designed by our sister company, **Still Human**, for education professionals. The app is designed to ease the stresses and pressures of working in education. It offers practical tips and tools through useful articles, resources, podcasts and short courses, helping you make small, manageable changes to your daily routine and improving your wellbeing both at work and beyond.

How to get started: |

Download the Still Human app

Find it on the **App Store** or **Google Play**
You can also access via the web:
https://app.stillhuman.co.uk/register
Enter your registration code
When prompted, enter this code: **QADX8S**

By following the link below, you will find an information leaflet which sets out what the app can offer and how to use it. **https://www.visionforeducation.co.uk/view_pdf/still-human-app-leaflet-staff**

If you need any help, please contact **support@app.stillhuman.co.uk**

Staff conduct reminders

Professional boundaries

When working on supply, staff should uphold the whole-school approach to behaviour by teaching and modelling expected behaviour and positive relationships. Staff must ensure that they maintain firm professional boundaries with students and colleagues, so that they're always considered as an exemplary role model.

Further to this, as per our code of conduct, we advise that our staff **must not**:

- Develop inappropriate relationships with children, young people or vulnerable adults. If you think a student may be infatuated with you, speak to the school or setting's DSL or Deputy DSL as soon as possible, so that appropriate action can be taken.
- Make inappropriate promises to children, young people or vulnerable adults.
- Touch a student in any way that could be considered indecent, nor indulge in horseplay, tickling or fun fights.
- Give/offer gifts to students or their parents/ carers.
- Offer lifts to a child, young person or vulnerable adult outside the agreements of your role.
- Spend time with students off-site outside of the agreements of your role.
- Exchange private texts, phone numbers, personal email addresses or photos of a personal nature with pupils or parents and carers.

Usually, you should never be on your own with a child. If you cannot avoid this, make sure you keep the classroom door open and do not block any exits.

Whilst working in regulated activity, you must maintain professionalism in your work and personal life. Please see below guidance from our code of conduct relating to appropriate social media usage:

- Headteachers, parents, pupils and prospective employers may look you up on social media. Ask yourself if you would be comfortable about your content being viewed. If not, remove any dubious material.
- Do not engage in online activities that may bring yourself, the school or alternative provision, or the agency into disrepute. Derogatory, defamatory or offensive comments about pupils, parents and carers or colleagues must not be posted.
- Do not create, or be involved in the creation or distribution, of any content that would be considered indecent, inappropriate and/or unsuitable to be associated with a professional working in a position of trust with children and young people.
- Always maintain a professional tone online. Use of expletives, sexual content or any form of discrimination or harassment is always unacceptable.



If you do post your opinions online, make it clear that these are your personal views and not those of your agency by adding a statement to that effect. Staff must be aware that their online presence may be interpreted as an indication of their character, so if anything deemed as inappropriate is brought to our attention by a member of the public, we may need to review your file.

Please see our code of conduct below for the full guidance: **https://www.visionforeducation.co.uk/view_pdf/code-of-conduct**

Mandatory Reporting

The NSPCC has produced a free webinar for professionals in relation to the new statutory requirement for the mandatory reporting of child sexual abuse in England.

Learn what you need to do to prepare for the new statutory requirement for the mandatory reporting of child sexual abuse in England.

In these bitesize sessions, NSPCC's safeguarding experts share:

- the story so far and what's happening now
- who the new duty will apply to
- what you should report
- what stops children speaking out
- the process for reporting
- survivor stories and what we've learnt





What is the mandatory reporting duty?

The Crime and Policing Bill will introduce a new statutory duty for people in key roles to report child sexual abuse when they are made aware of it.

This new duty will implement one of the key recommendations from the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA). There will also be a new criminal offence of obstructing an individual from making a report.

You can register to watch the free webinar on demand **here:** https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/training/mandatory-reporting-webinars

Policy Reminders

- Ensure familiarity with your school's safeguarding, whistleblowing, and online safety policies.
- Always report any safeguarding concern, however small, to the DSL or deputy DSL immediately.

Spotlight on: Contextual safeguarding concerns

Children in gangs

Criminals often exploit children and vulnerable individuals to support their illicit activities. Victims may be coerced into stealing, supplying drugs, carrying weapons and various other crimes. Children who are recruited for this commonly suffer from bullying and may want to gain the protection, respect and financial rewards that being part of a gang can provide, unaware of the associated risks. Signs of criminal exploitation in a child include, but are not limited to, being angry or aggressive, having unexplained money or new items, frequent absence from education, substance abuse, carrying weapons, making an unusual amount of phone calls, and going missing from home. If you believe that a child is actively, or at risk of, being exploited or groomed by a criminal organisation, report to the school DSL immediately and/or the police where there is immediate risk of harm.

The following resource is extremely useful for further information:
https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/types-of-abuse/gangs-criminal-exploitation/



Cuckooing

Cuckooing is a form of criminal exploitation, where criminals take over the home of a vulnerable individual, to use the address for illegal activities.

The illegal activities that cuckooing involves include, but are not limited to, running a drug operation from the address, storing weapons at the property, and using the property to facilitate sex work. Children living in these properties are significantly at risk of physical, emotional and sexual abuse. As a result, it is crucial to contact the police if you believe that a young person is living at an address where cuckooing is occurring.

Signs of cuckooing may include signs of drug use, an unusual number of individuals attending an address, you haven't seen the homeowner for some time and when you have, they've seemed anxious or not themselves.

https://www.met.police.uk/advice/advice-and-information/cuckooing/cuckooing/

GDPR



Protecting your data is important to us. Find out more about how we comply with legislation in the Privacy section on our websites.

- www.visionforeducation.co.uk/privacy-policy
- www.abc-teachers.co.uk/privacy-policy
- www.smartteachers.co.uk/privacy-policy

Please note that some of the resources detailed in this bulletin are from third-party providers which are not part of Edwin (Vision for Education/ABC Teachers/Smart Teachers) and should be used at your own discretion.

