



Safeguarding Briefing - 4th March 2024

Dear Colleague,

IMPORTANT UPDATE Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023

In December 2023 the DfE published a long-awaited update to the statutory guidance, Working Together to Safeguard Children (WTTSC). On 23rd February 2024, an update was published. The webpage which hosts the latest version of Working Together to Safeguard Children describes the changes as follows:

Last updated 23 February 2024 *[My notes in italics]*

Page 26, paragraph 48: amended the wording used to describe lead safeguarding partners *[related to the police representative]*

Page 42: corrected the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel email address. *[correction]*

Page 161: updated the glossary definition of 'safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children' to match that on pg 7 to 8 *[see below]*

Page 167: linked to the latest version of 'Good practice guidance on working with parents with a learning disability'. *[updated link]*

When the December version of Working Together was published, the DfE also published a document it said was a list of the changes that had been made. I used that document to highlight the changes that were most relevant to schools and shared them with you. In that changes document, no mention is made of an important change to the definition of safeguarding.

When I reviewed the post recent changes as described on the webpage, I noted that the text 'Page 161: updated the glossary definition of 'safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children' to match that on

page 7 to 8.' This prompted me to look at both those pages to compare them: page 161 has the [old] definition of safeguarding; page 7 has the new one.

Important change to the definition of safeguarding

Following on from the draft version of WTTSC (published for consultation in June 2023) three proposed changes were made to the definition of safeguarding, which have now been included. The final version of the amended version of the statutory definition of safeguarding can be found in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 on pages 7 and 8; and in the glossary on page 167. The additions to the definition are shown in bold below.

I imagine that we can expect this new statutory definition to appear in the next update to Keeping Children Safe in Education.

UPDATED Statutory definition of safeguarding (Source: Working Together to Safeguarding Children 2023, pages 7 and 8)

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children - defined for the purposes of this guidance as:

providing help and support to meet the needs of children as soon as problems emerge

protecting children from maltreatment, **whether that is within or outside the home, including online**

preventing impairment of children's mental and physical health or development

ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care

promoting the upbringing of children with their birth parents, or otherwise their family network through a kinship care arrangement, whenever possible and where this is in the best interests of the children

taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes **in line with the outcomes set out in the Children's Social Care National Framework.**

You can download the latest copy of Working Together to Safeguard Children here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2>

Although aimed at social care colleagues, DSLs will find the Children's Social Care National Framework of interest and information can be found

here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/childrens-social-care-national-framework>

Local Safeguarding Practice Review: Alfie Steel

Recently, we referenced a Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review (LCSPR) which had been published following the murder of nine-year old Alfie Steel in February 2021 by his mother and her partner. Although there is much to learn from many of these practice reviews, in this case there were factors which aren't often mentioned; some of those are included below:

Key issues

Restrictions, including lockdown, as a result of coronavirus had a huge impact on Alfie's worsening situation

Information from the school led to an escalation of concerns; this was especially important as other agencies had an inconsistent response.

[We mustn't underestimate the significant impact schools can have.]

Just because someone has requested a Clare's Law enquiry doesn't mean the identified person (mother's partner) is not a potential risk (More information on Clare's Law (properly known as the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS)) can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/domestic-violence-disclosure-scheme-pilot-guidance>)

Over-reliance of child's verbal disclosure often ignores the observational evidence around the child; and that the child is frightened or has been coached or threatened to say that 'everything's fine. We need to remember that adults (for example, neighbours) were very frightened by mother's partner and feared his repercussions, so it is inconceivable that Alfie wasn't frightened, even though he had not disclosed how fearful he was.

Professionals discussed whether it was legitimate or legal to ask parents not to use physical means to discipline [even though this appeared to be disproportionate to Alfie's behaviour]. Although, it is lawful for a parent or carer to smack their child where this amounts to 'reasonable punishment', it would be unlawful if causes wounding, actual bodily harm, grievous bodily harm or child cruelty. (See Coram:

<https://childlawadvice.org.uk/information-pages/the-law-on-smacking-children>)

Further information

Two of our Safeguarding Briefing contributors have written further documents that will help you talk about how child cruelty escalates over time and can result in unlawful deaths.

You can access the documents here:

[LSPR Alfie Steel written by Helen](#)

[LSPR Alfie Steel written by Tracy Griffin](#)

Book a consultancy Call with Andrew Hall

Sometimes issues arise in safeguarding leadership where a full day's consultancy with the costs, time and travel involved is excessive and a shorter conversation would be really helpful. (As you'll understand, I'm afraid it won't be possible to offer advice about individual cases.)

You can choose to book a Zoom call or a phone call here: bookaconsultancycall.co.uk

Leeds Beckett University - Guide to Addressing Emotionally Based School Avoidance

There are many reasons why formerly happy pupils may start avoiding education. Some may feel that the pressure put upon them in the educational sphere, is too much to handle. For others changes in their home lives may prevent them from attending school. Equally important are changes in the social dynamic in which they form a part. Perhaps a friendship has gone awry or they may have become subject to bullying or peer pressure from their fellow pupils. The question of what to do in these circumstances, can be difficult to answer. The Carnegie School of Education, at Leeds Beckett University have attempted to help in this endeavour. Their recently published resources on the matter, are well worth a read. If interested, please follow the link below:

<https://www.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/research/carnegie-centre-of-excellence-for-mental-health-in-schools/emotionally-based-school-avoidance-guide>

Staff Question of the Week

It would seem helpful today to have as our question of the week 'What is the definition of safeguarding?'

Hopefully people will be confident to talk about the old version; and you can share the changes. Highlight particularly the part about harm in all aspects of a young person's life, not only at home; and the presumption that children will be brought up by their birth parents or those within their wider kinship.

Did Someone Forward this Safeguarding Briefing to You?

If you would like to receive your own copy of the Safeguarding Briefing, simply go to: www.safeguardingbriefing.co.uk

Vacancy for Safeguarding Link Trustee (Portsmouth)

UTC Portsmouth seeks an experienced educational professional to join the Board of Trustees and to become its Safeguarding Link Trustee.

You can find out more Information by going to their website:

<https://www.utcportsmouth.org/vacancies>

Forthcoming Courses

Advanced Safeguarding for DSLs

This is a four-session course for DSLs over a full-day. The course is offered live and as a recorded replay. When the course is live, there are plenty of opportunities to contribute with observations, questions or answers. As a recording, the interactions from other people are included and feedback notes that this makes it feel like you are not on your own.

"I just wanted to say that I thought today's training was absolutely fantastic. By a mile it was the most engaging training I have done."

Next live online courses are:

Wednesday, 13th March 2024 [Book here](#)

Wednesday 17th April 2024 [Book here](#)

The on-demand course is always available and is updated after each live session [Book Online](#)

Other available online courses include:

Whole School Safeguarding Course
Safeguarding and Governance

Safeguarding Refresher
An Introduction to Cybersecurity

For further details, go to:

www.safeguardingschools.co.uk/availablecourses

Until next time, keep safe,

Andrew Hall
Specialist Safeguarding Consultant,
Director, Success In Schools Ltd.

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