
**CHILD PROTECTION FOR SCHOOLS AND EDUCATION SETTINGS – POLICY
AND GUIDANCE DOCUMENT**

**Responsible Cabinet Member(s) – Councillor Chris McEwan, Children’s Services Portfolio
Geoff Pennington, Director of Education**

Purpose of Report

1. This report is brought to members to advise them about documentation about child protection issues prepared for schools and education settings by the education department, working in close partnership with other agencies. The documentation includes a revised child protection policy, agreement for which as substantive policy is also being sought.

Information and Analysis

2. If children are to be properly protected in Darlington, it is important that schools are partners in any protection strategy. This means that it is vital to support, develop, guide and advise schools on managing the protection of children.
3. Protecting children means that school staff need to be fully aware of the signs and symptoms of abuse and alert to any potential abuse in a child’s life; children need to feel confident that they will be heard and listened to if they disclose abuse, and parents need to be sure that their children are safe in our schools. This is an onerous responsibility which is taken so seriously in Darlington that a whole time Child Protection Support and Development Officer is employed by the education department to provide support to our schools and education settings.
4. Protecting children also means protecting staff, from the risks of inappropriate allegation.
5. To support children and those who work with them in schools and education settings, including volunteers, a policy and handbook of guidance was developed in 2003 and was launched for us by Alan Milburn. This was seen as very useful by schools but, arising from practice review and developing expertise, it is timely to revise the contents of the handbook and the policy.
6. The documents attached as Appendix A are the new revised documents. They include more detailed guidance on staff keeping themselves safe, a greater focus on ‘safe schools’; guidance on managing personnel issues; a description of support for staff subject to allegation and a model child protection policy for schools to adapt to their own circumstances, as well as other guidance and information sections.

Outcome of Consultation

7. The documentation attached has been developed in partnership with colleagues from Social Services, the Police, the PCT and from schools, all of whom are members of our Education Child Protection Steering Group, which oversaw the revision of the handbook.

Legal Implications

8. This report has been considered by the Borough Solicitor for legal implications in accordance with the Council's approved procedures. There are no issues which the Borough Solicitor considers need to be brought to the specific attention of Members, other than those highlighted in the report.

Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998

9. The contents of this report have been considered in the context of the requirements placed on the Council by Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, namely, the duty on the Council to exercise its functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area. It is not considered that the contents of this report have any such effect.

Council Policy Framework

10. The issues contained within this report represent an update of existing Council policy.

Decision Deadline

11. For the purpose of the 'call-in' procedure this does not represent an urgent matter

Key Decisions

12. This is a key decision as it affects all schools and therefore, all wards.

Recommendation

13. It is recommended that the contents of the handbook and the revised policy as attached at Appendix A are approved.

Reasons

14. The recommendation is supported as it is necessary to update and revise the exiting policy in order to keep it current with developing good practice.

Geoffrey Pennington.

Background Papers

The Laming Report.

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