

At Ravenscote, we understand that safeguarding is **everyone's** responsibility.  
**If you have any concerns about a child, speak to the DSL or a DDSL immediately.**



DSL: Mrs Brookes      **"It could happen here"**

DDSLs: Mrs Wells, Mrs Webster, Miss Wheeler,  
Mrs Nicholson, Miss Mills

## Safeguarding: The duties and responsibilities of Parent Teacher Associations

According to the Department for Education (DfE) statutory guidance [Keeping children safe in education](#) safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children and young people is everyone's responsibility.

Even if your PTA volunteering role does not involve work or volunteering activity directly with children, the importance of understanding safeguarding and child protection is essential because the school or college who you are volunteering for obviously does work with children.

As a volunteer you can be seen to be in a position of power and trust. For this reason, safe working practices must be adhered to at all times, as a duty of care to the children, yourself and the staff around you. Children have a right to be safe and should be protected from all forms of abuse and neglect.

### Safe working practices

The examples below outline some of the areas you should consider to help safeguard children and young people, but also help safeguard yourself.

- Do not behave in a manner that could be deemed as **offensive** to the people around you. For example, using foul or abusive language, discussions of a personal nature, be under the influence of alcohol or inappropriately dressed.
- **Do not offer lifts** unless it is specified in your role. If it is part of your role make sure you follow safe working practice outlined by the organisation you work or volunteer for.
- You should not be **in personal communication** with children or young people – including texting, messaging, or social networking sites.
- Be **open and honest**; work in a way that cannot lead to anybody questioning your motivations or intentions.
- Do not discriminate; always maintain the same **high professional standards** regardless of culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief or sexual orientation.

- You should not share any confidential or personal information about the children or young people except for professional use. The information should not be used as a source of **gossip**.

## Be vigilant

Safeguarding and promoting welfare is everyone's responsibility, so being vigilant is extremely important. Children and young people can be at risk from others, but they can also put themselves at risk.

You will see and overhear things that others may not notice, so if you have concerns then you must report them to the school's designated safeguarding lead (DSL).

### Examples:

- You notice cuts or burns on a young person's arm which could be deep or superficial and the young person asks for first aid. Asking for first aid could be a cry for help because the young person needs to talk to someone.
- You notice a child will not take their jacket off in hot weather or is wearing many layers of clothes. This may indicate self-harm, an eating disorder or neglect.
- A young person complains of being fat and doesn't eat regularly. You notice they only eat low calorie food such as grapes or celery; they appear to have low self-esteem. This may indicate an eating disorder.
- You overhear conversations about drinking alcohol in the park, arranging to meet older friends, gifts, talk of two SIM cards or phones and you notice them using other people's phones. This may indicate a child is being groomed.
- You hear a conversation of a sexual nature that is not age appropriate. You become aware they have sent or received texts of an inappropriate nature. This is risky behaviour.

## How to respond when you have a concern

If you have concerns about a child or young person, doing nothing is not an option because you will not be [fulfilling your duty of care](#). But it is not your responsibility to investigate; in fact, you must not investigate. However, you do have an obligation to pass on disclosures, allegations or your concerns to your organisation's designated safeguarding lead so that they can act to protect a child should it be necessary.

## How to respond if a child confides abuse to you

If a child or young person tells you that they are being abused, it is important that you know how to respond. Here are the universal principles regardless of the age of the child. **It is important you:**

- Stay calm.
- Find a quiet place where your conversation won't be interrupted. As a volunteer, you should be in sight of other people. If you have not had a DBS check with your organisation, you must never be alone with a child.
- Attempt to make the child or young person feel safe and secure.

- Be patient.
- Listen carefully to the child or young person and take it seriously.
- Reassure them that they have done nothing wrong in telling you.
- Write down what you have been told as soon as possible. It should be dated, timed and signed. It should then be given to the designated safeguarding lead immediately.

## It is important you do no :

- Promise confidentiality.
- Ask leading questions.
- Probe for more information.
- Panic or look shocked or angry.
- Make the child or young person repeat their story.
- Interrupt.
- Give an opinion.
- Inform parents until you have a discussion with your safeguarding lead.

## Example scenarios

1. Mary volunteers as a helper with young people. One of the young people has sent her a social networking friend request. What should Mary do?

*If a young person or parent requests to be a friend via social networking, good practice is not to accept. **Remember** if you accept you are making yourself vulnerable because you have chosen to share your personal information, but also you will see the young person's or parent's personal information which could leave you open to allegations of inappropriate conduct. Make sure you familiarise yourself with your organisation's staff code of conduct policy.*

2. Helen works as a cleaner. She notices one of the children is wearing clothes that don't fit her and look dirty. The other children tease her about how she smells. Helen feels it isn't her business; surely others would have noticed it, so she decides not to do anything. What should Helen have done?

*Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of young people is everyone's business. Helen should express her concerns to the designated safeguarding lead or welfare officer*

*The following areas should be considered:*

- a) *The parent/s may be struggling to care for their children. The following factors maybe influential – finances, housing, mental health, learning disability, substance misuse, domestic violence – so early intervention may be required.*
- b) *Possible neglect.*
- c) *The girl is being bullied and this will affect her self-esteem.*

3. David has recently started working with children. You notice that he is sharing lots of information with the children about his personal life. Is this acceptable practice? If not, why, and what should you do?

*This is unacceptable practice. David has a responsibility to remain professional at all times. All staff have a responsibility to safeguard the welfare and best interests of children. They should adopt high standards of personal conduct to maintain the confidence and respect of the public and those with whom they work.*

4. A parent stops you in the street and starts asking you about a boy you work with who, they believe, is bullying their daughter. They ask you about what he and his parents are like and whether he has problems. Should you be discussing this? How would you deal with this situation?

*Sharing information about a child to another parent is unacceptable. Parents expect that a professional standard is always kept and that their child is not a source of gossip. You should be polite in your response and advise the parent to contact the organisation.*

**If you have any questions about the contents of this document, please contact your organisation's designated safeguarding lead.**