

**SUPPLEMENTARY GUIDANCE**  
**FOR**  
**SCHOOLS AND EDUCATION SETTINGS**  
**ON**  
**CHILD PROTECTION PROCEDURES**

These Procedures should be read in conjunction with:

[Keeping children safe in education: Statutory guidance for schools and colleges](#) – 1 September 2025 (Department for Education, Sept 2025)

[Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023](#) (HM Government, December 2023, Updated June 2025)

[EYFS Statutory Framework for Group and School-Based Providers](#) (Department for Education, September 2025)

Tower Hamlets Safeguarding Children Partnership [Multi-Agency Level of Need Guidance](#)

Tower Hamlets SCP Supplementary Guidance for Schools and Education Settings on Managing Concerns and Allegations of Abuse against Staff which may meet the Harm Threshold or which do not meet the Harm Threshold– September 2025

and

[The London Safeguarding Children Partnership Core Procedures](#)

## INTRODUCTION

Sections 157 and 175 of the Education Act 2002 and the supporting Department for Education (DfE) statutory guidance, [“Keeping children safe in education: Statutory guidance for schools and colleges – 1 September 2025”](#) (DfE, Sept 2025) specify the need for all schools and education settings, including non-maintained schools, independent schools, academies, further education institutions, and Local Authorities exercising education functions, to make arrangements to ensure that these functions are carried out with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

The guidance from the DfE (Sept 2025) defines safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children 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
- and taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes

‘Children’ includes everyone under the age of 18.

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is emphasised to be **everyone’s** responsibility. **Everyone** who comes into contact with children and their families and carers has a role to play in safeguarding children. In order to fulfil this responsibility effectively, all professionals should make sure their approach is child-centred. This means that they should consider, at all times, what is in the **best interests** of the child. It is recognised that no single professional can have a full picture of a child’s needs and circumstances and that if children and families are to receive the right help at the right time then **everyone** who comes into contact with them has a role to play in identifying concerns, sharing information and taking prompt action.

These provisions are extended to other local authority settings and to partner agencies by Sections 10 and 11 of the Children Act 2004.

These provisions underpin and reinforce the common law duty of care and sit alongside other statutory responsibilities in this area, such as those for health and safety, and dealing with bullying.

These requirements are reinforced in [“Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023”](#) (HM Government, Updated June 2025) which specifies that under The Children Act 2004, as amended by the Children and Social Work Act 2017, within a local authority area, the Police, Integrated Care Board, and the Local Authority are under a duty to make arrangements to work together, and with other partners locally, to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in their area. This includes developing local procedures for the reporting, investigation, and follow-up of concerns of a child protection nature that comply with the legal requirements detailed in the guidance.

Within the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, the [Tower Hamlets Safeguarding Children Partnership](#) (THSCP) has strategic responsibility for these working together arrangements.

The Children Act 1989 and national guidance such as [“Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023”](#) (HM Government, Updated June 2025) and [“What to do if you’re worried a child is being abused 2015”](#) (DfE, March 2015) clearly specify that those who come into contact with children and families in their everyday work, including practitioners who do not have a specific role in relation to safeguarding children, have a duty to promote and safeguard the welfare of children. This includes having a duty to report concerns of a child protection nature and a duty to cooperate with those agencies empowered to investigate such concerns and put in place support plans to safeguard the welfare of the child.

In addition, [“Information sharing: Advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services to children, young people, parents and carers”](#) (Department for Education 2015, updated May 2024) emphasises the importance of appropriate information sharing in child protection and safeguarding the wellbeing of children.

The Tower Hamlets Safeguarding Children Partnership has formally adopted the revised 7<sup>th</sup> edition of the [London Safeguarding Children Procedures](#) issued by the London Safeguarding Children Partnership (Updated 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025). The procedures set out in the current document are for all staff in schools and education settings and should be viewed as supplementary to the London Safeguarding Children Procedures. The procedures set out in the current document apply to Teachers, Teaching Assistants, Nurses, Learning Mentors, Home/School Liaison Officers, Counsellors, other Support Staff, but also Professionals who work in schools and education settings, such as Attendance and Welfare Advisors (AWAs), Librarians, Careers Advisors, Educational Psychologists, Music Tutors, Behaviour specialists, Support for Learning practitioners, Home Tutors, School Improvement Advisors, and Youth Workers.

Only Children's Social Care (Social Services), the NSPCC and the Police can carry out Child Protection investigations. Staff working in schools/settings should not attempt to investigate a child protection matter as it may compromise any possible legal proceedings. There is a need only to establish sufficient details and information for a decision to be made about making a referral, in accordance with the Tower Hamlets [Level of Need Guidance](#)..

It is vital that any concerns are reported as soon as possible, and that unnecessary delay is avoided. In order for the investigative agencies to carry out their statutory duties, they will need to access records and collate information. They will have to contact parents/carers and may need to arrange a medical examination.

When Child Protection referrals are made late in the day this may delay appropriate action until the following morning, which may be potentially serious and put the child at risk of harm. Staff members working in schools/settings have no powers to retain a child or to refuse to release a child to the parent/carer at the end of the school day, unless the Police and/or Children's Social Care has given advice to do otherwise.

The requirements of "[Keeping children safe in education: Statutory guidance for schools/settings and colleges – 1 September 2025](#)" (DfE, Sept 2025) apply to all types of schools and education settings, and the Governing Body/Trustees/Management Committee/Proprietor are responsible for ensuring that these requirements are met and fulfilled in full.

## **THE ROLES OF THE DESIGNATED SAFEGUARDING LEAD AND THE DESIGNATED GOVERNOR**

In Annex C of "[Keeping children safe in education: Statutory guidance for schools/settings and colleges – 1 September 2025](#)" (DfE, Sept 2025) detailed information is given on the role of the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Every school and education setting in the borough is required to have a Designated Safeguarding Lead. School Governing Bodies and the Headteacher have responsibility for ensuring that a Designated Safeguarding Lead is appointed. In some cases, particularly in primary schools, the Headteacher may take on the responsibility of the Designated Safeguarding Lead. In schools/settings where the Headteacher or another senior member of staff is also the Proprietor, they should not be appointed to the role of Designated Safeguarding Lead, as stated in "[Keeping children safe in education: Statutory guidance for schools/settings and colleges – 1 September 2025](#)" (DfE, Sept 2025).

Schools/settings will also have Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads, but they should be trained to the same standard as the Designated Safeguarding Lead but

the ultimate lead responsibility for safeguarding remains with the Designated Safeguarding Lead and this responsibility cannot be delegated to a Deputy DSL.

The Tower Hamlets Education Safeguarding Service (THESS) conducts an annual survey at the start of each academic year to collate the identity and contact details of the Designated Safeguarding Leads and Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads, which is then shared with appropriate services as necessary. It is the responsibility of the school to update THESS with any in-year personnel changes to the DSL or Deputy DSL roles by completing and submitting the following online form: [School DSL Contact Information Form \(office.com\)](#)

Each of the support services within the Local Authority where staff members work in schools and other education settings, or work with children and young people and their families, should also have a Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Designated Safeguarding Leads should be familiar with the current procedures and should engage with the local offer of safeguarding training including that provided by LA services such as Education Safeguarding and Children's Services (Learning Academy) as well as multi-agency training opportunities provided through the [Tower Hamlets Safeguarding Children Partnership](#). The DSL's role is to ensure that these procedures are followed in their respective school/setting and to liaise with other agencies as required to ensure that advice is sought, and referrals are made in accordance with the procedures.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead also carries responsibility for maintaining the records of children within the school/setting who are identified as vulnerable including those known to Children's Social Care ensuring that concerns which have arisen about the wellbeing of children at the school/setting are fully recorded. In accordance with statutory standards, safeguarding records should include:

- a clear and comprehensive summary of the concern
- details of how the concern was followed up and resolved, and
- a note of any action taken, decisions reached and the outcome.

This information is confidential and should only be stored and shared in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and GDPR. These records should be safeguarded in a secure place separate to the children's academic records. The Designated Safeguarding Lead takes the lead on supporting the transition of pupils at standard and non-standard transition points including ensuring the transfer of safeguarding records to the pupil's new school within the first 5 days of the child starting. The DSL of the new school should be proactive in making contact with the pupil's previous school to discuss and plan the transition. The DSL should escalate when safeguarding information has not been shared and the safeguarding records are not being sent within the statutory timescales.

It is required that the Governing Body or equivalent appoint a board member to take leadership responsibility for safeguarding. The Designated Governor must be familiar with these procedures and should also engage in the local safeguarding training offer including the bespoke safeguarding training that Education Safeguarding offers for governors.

The Designated Governor for Safeguarding takes lead responsibility to ensure that the school complies with these procedures in addition to those set out in school's safeguarding policies and relevant statutory and non-statutory government guidance, and local multi-agency guidance. The Designated Governor should work in liaison with the Designated Safeguarding Lead and report to the school Governing Body on an annual basis as a minimum. However, the Full Governing Body or equivalent takes strategic leadership responsibility for the school's safeguarding arrangements and have a collective legal responsibility to ensure that the school/setting complies with these procedures.

Where there are concerns relating to the involvement of members of staff in behaviour that may meet the definition of an allegation or incidents of a child protection nature, the Designated Safeguarding Lead must ensure that the Headteacher/Manager is informed and that procedures are followed as set out in Part 4 of "Keeping children safe in education: Statutory guidance for schools and colleges – 1 September 2025" (DfE, Sept 2025) and the THSCP Supplementary Guidance on Managing Allegations of Abuse against Members of Staff and Concerns that do not meet the Harm Threshold (September 2025). In the case of an allegation against or incident involving the Headteacher, the Chair of Governors or equivalent must ensure that the relevant procedures are followed.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead and Designated Governor in collaboration with the Headteacher should ensure that the school fully complies with Department for Education requirements in relation to safeguarding training for staff, the required policies and procedures being in place and implemented effectively, and providing an annual report to the Full Governing Body on safeguarding compliance and issues that have arisen in relation to safeguarding.

The DfE requires that all staff in schools/settings read and understand Part 1 of "Keeping children safe in education: Statutory guidance for schools/settings and colleges – 1 September 2025" (DfE, Sept 2025). At induction all staff members including temporary staff and volunteers must be made aware of the safeguarding systems in place and the role of the Designated Safeguarding Lead as well as completing safeguarding training including Online Safety

At induction and when there are updates, staff members should be provided with copies of Part One of the DfE statutory guidance "Keeping children safe in education: Statutory guidance for schools and colleges – 1 September 2025" (DfE, Sept 2025), and of the school's safeguarding policies (the Child Protection Policy, Pupil Behaviour Policy, the Staff Behaviour Policy/Code of Conduct as a minimum)

and which should amongst other things include staff/pupil relationships and communications including the use of social media, and the safeguarding response to children missing education.

It is emphasised that all staff members should be aware of:

- **information and guidance relating to the identify and role of the Designated Safeguarding Lead**
- **the local Early Help process and understand their role in it**
- **what to do if a child tells them they are being abused or neglected**
- **the process for making referrals to children's social care and for statutory assessments under the Children Act 1989 that may follow a referral, along with the role that they might be expected to play in such assessments**

Any child may benefit from early help, but all school staff should be particularly alert to the potential need for Early Help for a child who:

- is disabled or has certain health conditions and has specific additional needs;
- has special educational needs (whether or not they have a statutory Education, Health and Care Plan);
- has a mental health need;
- is a young carer;
- is showing signs of being drawn in to anti-social or criminal behaviour, including gang involvement and association with organised crime groups or county lines;
- is frequently missing/goes missing from care or from home;
- has experienced multiple suspensions, is at risk of being permanently excluded from schools, colleges and in Alternative Provision or a Pupil Referral Unit.
- is at risk of so-called honour based abuse such as Female Genital Mutilation or Forced Marriage;
- is at risk of modern slavery, trafficking or exploitation;
- is at risk of being radicalised or exploited;
- is in a family circumstance presenting challenges for the child, such as drug and alcohol misuse, adult mental health issues and domestic abuse

- has a parent or carer in custody, or is affected by parental offending
- is misusing drugs or alcohol themselves;
- has returned home to their family from care; and
- is a privately fostered child;
- is persistently absent from education, including persistent absences for part of the school day.

Advice and guidance in relation to school's offer and provision of Early Help support can be obtained from the **Tower Hamlets [Multi-Agency Support Team \(MAST\)](#) on 020 7364 5006 Option 2 or 3 or via the [MAST Request for Support Form](#).**

All staff should be aware of indicators of abuse and neglect so that they are able to identify cases of children who may be in need of help or protection. In relation to types of abuse it is highlighted that all staff in the school/setting should be aware that abuse, neglect and safeguarding issues are rarely standalone events that can be covered by one definition or label. In most case multiple issues will overlap with one another.

The DfE guidance specifies that the Designated Safeguarding Lead (and Deputy) should complete updated safeguarding and child protection training every two years. The Tower Hamlets Safeguarding Children Partnership recommends that this should be at least 2 days of appropriate and relevant safeguarding training. All staff members in a school/education setting should receive appropriate safeguarding and child protection training (including Online Safety) which is regularly updated at least annually and as and when required, so that they have the relevant knowledge and skills to safeguard children effectively. The Tower Hamlets Safeguarding Children Partnership recommends that all staff members should receive formal accredited safeguarding training of a substantial nature such as a half a day session at least every 2 years, which ought to meet the requirements set out in KCSIE Part 1 and provide information on local safeguarding arrangements and the local safeguarding landscape

Staff members including volunteers should feel able to raise concerns about poor or unsafe practice and potential failures in the school's safeguarding system. Appropriate whistleblowing procedures should be put in place to support staff to raise such concerns with the leadership team and how they can report concerns via external government [Prescribed Bodies and Persons](#) if this is deemed a necessary course of action. These procedures should be set out in the setting's Whistleblowing Policy and be included in staff training and staff behavior policies.

## **RECORDING OF INFORMATION RELATED TO CONCERNS ABOUT A CHILD'S WELLBEING AND USE OF THE TOWER HAMLETS EARLY HELP ASSESSMENT (EHA) FORM**

As stated above the Designated Safeguarding Lead carries lead responsibility for maintaining the safeguarding records of children within the school who are known to Children's Social Care and of concerns that have arisen about the wellbeing of children at the school.

Records, which are to be of a comprehensive nature, should be clear and accurate with fact and opinion differentiated and be in chronological order. This information is confidential and should only be shared in accordance with Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025, Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 and Information Sharing: Advice for Practitioners 2015. These records should be safeguarded in a secure place away from the children's academic records. Schools/settings that make use of electronic safeguarding record systems must be assured that the data which includes personal and sensitive information is stored and processed in compliance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the GDPR.

When a child is deemed to be in need of early help, the DSL may decide to support the child through the school's internal pastoral support system. However, where a child and family would benefit from co-ordinated support from more than one organisation or agency, the DSL or identified Lead Professional should, with the consent and input of the child and family, complete the Tower Hamlets Early Help Assessment (EHA) online form. The Early Help Assessment needs to be evidence-based, have clear actions, and should identify what help the child and family require. The purpose of the EHA is to prevent needs escalating to a point where intervention is required under the Children Act 1989. The EHA should be reviewed at regular intervals and if the child's well-being is not improving the Designated Safeguarding Lead should consider making a referral to the Tower Hamlets MAST for statutory intervention. The Tower Hamlets Early Help Assessment may also be useful when there is single agency involvement, for example, to collate information about a child and family and to help coordinate plans of action.

It is vital that any concerns are reported as soon as possible, and that unnecessary delay is avoided. **If at any time, there is concern that a child has suffered from serious harm or is at risk of serious harm then this must be reported immediately – anybody can make a referral under such circumstances.**

Schools/settings need to be alert to the possible signs and symptoms of all forms of abuse. As well as ["What to do if you're worried a child is being abused 2015"](#) (DfE, March 2015), "Keeping children safe in education: Statutory guidance for schools/settings and colleges – 1 September 2025" (DfE, Sept 2025) has detailed information in Annex B relating to:

- Child Abduction and Community Safety Incidents
- Children and the court system
- Children missing from education
- Children with family members in prison
- Child criminal exploitation & Child sexual exploitation
- County lines
- Modern Slavery and the National Referral Mechanism
- Cybercrime
- Domestic abuse
- Mental Health
- Homelessness
- So-called 'honour-based' abuse including FGM and forced marriage
- Preventing radicalisation, The Prevent Duty and Channel
- Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools/settings and colleges
- The response to a report of sexual violence or sexual harassment
- Upskirting
- Additional advice and support.

School leaders and staff working directly with children are required to read this Annex in addition to “Keeping children safe in education: Statutory guidance for schools/settings and colleges – 1 September 2025” (DfE, Sept 2025) Part 1.

All staff should be reminded how the use of technology has become a significant component of many safeguarding issues with technology often providing the platform that facilitates harm, including Child-on-Child Abuse, Child Sexual and Criminal Exploitation, Radicalisation, and Sexual Predation. An effective approach to Online Safety is seen to be one that empowers to protect and educate the whole school in their use of technology and establishes mechanisms to identify, intervene and escalate any incident where appropriate so that the children involved are safeguarded.

Some of the safeguarding issues that schools/settings should be particularly alert to include:

### **Domestic Abuse:**

Domestic abuse can encompass a wide range of behaviours and may be a single incident or a pattern of incidents. That abuse can be, but is not limited to, psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional. Children are recognised in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 as victims of domestic abuse. They may see, hear, or experience the effects of abuse at home and/or suffer domestic abuse in their own intimate relationships (teenage relationship abuse). All of which can have a

detrimental and long-term impact on their health, well-being, development, and ability to learn.

## **Child Criminal and Sexual Exploitation**

**Child Criminal Exploitation** can include children being forced or manipulated into transporting drugs or money through county lines, working in cannabis factories, shoplifting, or pickpocketing. They can also be forced or manipulated into committing vehicle crime or threatening/committing serious violence to others. Children can become trapped by this type of exploitation, as perpetrators can threaten victims (and their families) with violence or entrap and coerce them into debt. They may be coerced into carrying weapons such as knives or begin to carry a knife for a sense of protection from harm from others. As children involved in criminal exploitation often commit crimes themselves, their vulnerability as victims is not always recognised by adults and professionals, (particularly older children), and they are not treated as victims despite the harm they have experienced. They may still have been criminally exploited even if the activity appears to be something they have agreed or consented to. It is important to note that the experience of girls who are criminally exploited can be very different to that of boys. The indicators may not be the same, however professionals should be aware that girls are at risk of criminal exploitation too. It is also important to note that both boys and girls being criminally exploited may be at higher risk of sexual exploitation.

**Child Sexual Exploitation** is a form of child sexual abuse. Sexual abuse may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing, and touching outside clothing. It may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in the production of sexual images, forcing children to look at sexual images or watch sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways or grooming a child in preparation for abuse including via the internet. Child Sexual Exploitation can occur over time or be a one-off occurrence and may happen without the child's immediate knowledge for example through others sharing videos or images of them on social media. It can affect any child who has been coerced into engaging in sexual activities. This includes 16- and 17-year-olds who can legally consent to have sex. Some children may not realise they are being exploited for example they believe they are in a genuine romantic relationship.

## **Serious Violence**

Staff should be aware of the indicators, which may signal children are at risk from, or are involved with, serious violent crime. These may include increased absence from school or college, a change in friendships or relationships with older individuals or groups, a significant decline in performance, signs of self-harm or a significant change in wellbeing, or signs of assault or unexplained injuries.

Unexplained gifts or new possessions could also indicate that children have been approached by, or are involved with, individuals associated with criminal networks or gangs and may be at risk of criminal exploitation.

### Forms of Child-on-Child Abuse

- Bullying
- Cyberbullying
- Abuse in Intimate Personal Relationships
- Physical Abuse
- Sexual Violence
- Sexual Harassment
- Causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent
- Consensual and non-consensual sharing of nudes and semi-nude images or videos
- Upskirting
- Initiation/hazing type violence

Schools/settings are reminded of their particular legal duties related to:

- [Children Missing from Education](#) and the legal duties on all schools/settings under the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2024 (DfE, 2024) to inform the Local Authority of:
  - (i) any pupil who fails to attend school regularly, or has been absent without the school's permission for a continuous period of 10 school days or more;
  - (ii) any pupil who is going to be deleted from the admissions register, and;
  - (iii) of every non-standard joiner and leaver i.e. of any pupils who join or leave the school at any time other than standard transition points, within 5 days of the child joining or leaving the school.
- **So called "Honour Based" Abuse** including forced marriage, breast ironing, virginity testing/hymenoplasty, and the mandatory reporting duty introduced under Section 5B of the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 (as inserted by section 74 of the Serious Crime Act 2015) which places a statutory duty upon teachers along with social workers and healthcare professionals, to report to the police where they discover (either through disclosure by the victim or visual evidence) that FGM appears to have been carried out on a girl under 18.
- **Preventing Radicalisation** and the duty under section 26 of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 ("the CTSA 2015") to have "due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism" ('the Prevent duty') and to 'have regard to the statutory guidance issued under section 29 of the CTSA 2015' ([the Prevent guidance](#)). Requirements are detailed in

terms of risk assessment, working in partnership, staff training and Information Technology policies.

Information on the signs and symptoms of abuse can be found at:

Tower Hamlets Safeguarding Children Partnership Website:

[www.thscp.org.uk](http://www.thscp.org.uk)

and

London Safeguarding Children Partnership Website:

<https://www.londonsafeguardingchildrenprocedures.co.uk/index.html>

## **EFFECTIVE RECORD KEEPING, INFORMATION SHARING AND THE TRANSFER OF INFORMATION WHEN CHILDREN CHANGE SCHOOLS/SETTINGS**

Effective record keeping, information sharing and the transfer of information when children change schools/settings have a very important role to play in safeguarding the welfare of children. When children change schools/settings, it is essential that their full records are transferred so that it can be ensured that they receive appropriate curriculum and teaching support at their new school, that any concerns about their welfare are known about and that any plan of support already in place can be continued.

When a child joins the school and safeguarding records have been requested but not received from the previous school, then the DSL should raise the concern with their Headteacher so that they can escalate the concern with the relevant school as a matter of priority. If the school has a Local Authority Attendance and Welfare Advisor, this officer should be notified to support the school's efforts to obtain the records.

It is vital that full records of actions taken are kept in relation to cases where pupils change school. These records can be used for reference if any issues subsequently arise in relation to the whereabouts of the child and the steps taken by the school at the time when the child moved.

Records related to concerns about the wellbeing of a child should be sent separately from the academic records within the first 5 days of the child starting at the school. Schools/settings sending records electronically must be assured that the process is secure and compliant with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the GDPR. A confirmation of receipt should be obtained in accordance with "Keeping Children Safe in Education" (DfE, September 2025). The safeguarding records should be directly sent to and received by a member of the DSL team. A full copy

of the records should always be retained by the sending school and kept locked in a secure location or stored securely electronically with restricted access, in the event of a query being received at a future date and records should only be deleted in accordance with the school's Policy on the Retention of Records.

## **TOWER HAMLETS MULTI-AGENCY SUPPORT TEAM (MAST) – 020 7364 5006 (Option 2 or 3)**

**Extension Numbers: 5606 / 5601 / 5358 / 7796 / 3342 / 7828 / 6469 / 3181**

In Tower Hamlets the front door of Children's Services to request statutory intervention (MASH) and the Early Help Hub has merged to form the [Multi Agency Support Team](#) (MAST). If there is a concern about the welfare of a child and the Designated Safeguarding Lead, parent or pupil would like to talk it through then they can contact the Tower Hamlets MAST. The Child Protection Advice Line (CPAL) can also be contacted by schools for advice and guidance on 020 7364 3444.

The Duty Social Worker will be able to discuss the concern, offer advice, and assist in deciding whether a formal referral is appropriate and facilitate the reporting of a formal safeguarding referral in accordance with Tower Hamlets Level of Need Guidance and the London Safeguarding Children Partnership Procedures.

When there is a specific concern of a child protection nature whereby it is thought that a child has been harmed or at risk of being harmed, then the Designated Safeguarding Lead should contact the Multi-Agency Support Team on 020 7364 5006 (Option 3) to discuss the matter and afterwards complete the MAST Request Form and email it through securely.

Where the child is a Child in Need whose development would be likely impaired without provision of services, or the child has a disability, whose developmental delay or welfare needs are likely only to be met through provision of social work led family support services, the Designated Safeguarding Lead should contact the Multi-Agency Support Team on 020 7364 5006 (Option 3) An assessment on the EHA Form should have already been completed for the child and family to give as detailed a picture of the situation as possible. The completed assessment can then be sent to the MAST for advice and consideration for other support.

The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) for Allegations provides advice and guidance to Headteachers, Managers, Governing Bodies/Trustees, the LA, Police, Health and the Voluntary sector in relation to allegations involving professionals and other carers working with children. The LADO coordinates the progress of such cases and is responsible for liaising with the other agencies. Schools/settings should always contact the LADO on 0207 364 0677 in the first instance to discuss

any allegation or concern of a child protection nature relating to a member of staff (including volunteers, contract and supply staff). The LADO will inform the school when to involve their HR Provider. In the event that the LADO is not available then school should contact Geraldine O'Donnell, Head of Service, Safeguarding and Quality Assurance, who line manages the LADO: 020 7364 6030 or [geraldine.o'donnell@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:geraldine.o'donnell@towerhamlets.gov.uk).

Emails must not be sent to report and log concerns about children and/or families without contacting the MAST or LADO first. This is contrary to statutory guidance and serves to clog up systems whilst such emails are worked through to try to establish why they are being sent. There is also the risk that information may get lost.

The MAST operates between 9.00am and 5.00pm except at weekends and on public holidays. If the concern arises outside of the hours operated by the Advice Line and it is believed the child may be at immediate risk of harm, then the Children's Social Care Emergency Out of Hours Team 020 7364 4079 – or the Police should be contacted without delay.

## **ACTION TO BE TAKEN – PHYSICAL INJURY, NEGLECT OR EMOTIONAL ABUSE**

Staff members should be encouraged to report their concerns about possible abuse and be able to raise concerns if they feel inappropriate or insufficient action has been taken. It is particularly important junior staff should not feel intimidated about discussing concerns that do not appear to have been taken up by more senior colleagues. No member of staff should be victimised or suffer adversely for reporting concerns. This also applies where there are concerns that a member of staff may have perpetrated abuse.

Any member of staff noticing an injury, however slight and for which the explanations are unsatisfactory or inconsistent must report this immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead. Where the Designated Safeguarding Lead decides that there is cause for concern, they must telephone the MAST/ and report the concern. A record must be made of the incident and kept, including discussions, decisions reached, and actions taken. The Tower Hamlets Safeguarding Children Partnership has issued guidance for all practitioners working with children on the management of concerning injuries: [Management of Suspicious, Unexplained Injuries, or Bruising in Children for all Frontline Practitioners](#) (September 2024).

These supplementary guidance procedures should be followed by any member of staff who has evidence of or suspects abuse of a child or is concerned about the ability of the parents/carers to provide for the child's protection, safety or well-

being. It should be noted that this includes concerns about incidents which may have taken place outside the school/setting, but which have been brought to the attention of the member of staff by another child, parent/carer or neighbour etc, including those raised anonymously.

Where a member of staff is concerned about the ability of the parent/carer to provide for the child's protection, safety or physical or emotional well-being, this should be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead. The Designated Safeguarding Lead will consider the matter and seek advice from Child Protection Advice Line/MAST. A record must be made of the concern, including discussions, decisions reached, and actions taken. The Tower Hamlets Safeguarding Children Partnership has provided a [Neglect Screening Tool](#) for professionals to support the identification of neglect.

If a child makes a direct allegation of abuse or has a distinct injury and/or is experiencing pain and/or discomfort and for which no reasonable and consistent explanation is available this should **not** be discussed with parents/carers in the first instance. The concern must be reported to MAST. A record must be made of the concern, including discussions, decisions reached, and actions taken.

If a less distinct injury is noticed or if the child makes a reference to having been physically punished but no injury is evident and no pain/discomfort is reported, the Designated Safeguarding Lead should call the MAST/Child Protection Advice Line (CPAL) to seek advice and act according to the advice given. A record must be made of the concern, including discussions, decisions reached, and actions taken.

The Duty Social Worker will liaise with the Team Manager or Duty Manager in the MAST and with the Assessment & Intervention Team in Children's Social Care for the area in which the child lives. Children's Social Care will then in turn consult with other investigative agencies and with the referrer on how and by whom the carer(s) will be informed of the concerns and of what action if any will be taken. If the child resides in a borough other than Tower Hamlets, the school should make contact with the front door of [Children's Social Care](#) of that particular borough for advice, guidance and next steps and if required make written referral for statutory intervention.

When a child is the subject of a statutory plan and/or the case is open to an allocated social worker then any new or additional concerns about the child's wellbeing must be reported directly to the allocated social worker in the first instance. If the child has learning difficulties and/or has a physical/sensory disability and attends a school for children with special educational needs, then any new or additional concerns about the child's wellbeing must be reported directly to the allocated social worker or to the Children with Disabilities Duty Team in the first instance.

The referrer will be informed in writing of the outcome of consideration of the referral by Children's Social Care within 1 working day. The school/setting must keep a full written record of events, discussions, decisions, and actions including all related communications.

## **ACTION TO BE TAKEN – SEXUAL ABUSE**

Any suspicion of sexual abuse or report made by a child that they have been sexually abused must be reported immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead who will immediately contact MAST.

Children's Social Care will respond in accordance with the London Safeguarding Partnership Procedures, and the Tower Hamlets Better Together Child Sexual Abuse Policy and Practice Guide (April 2024). The Local Authority and Health have jointly set out their [pathway for the management of suspected Child Sexual Abuse](#).

Parents/carers should not normally be informed at this stage as this may jeopardise the investigation and the safety of the child.

In cases where there is an allegation of or concern about sexual abuse a strategy meeting will be held in order to decide on the most appropriate way to proceed. The referrer will normally be invited to the strategy meeting.

## **CONCERNS ABOUT SEXUALLY ACTIVE CHILDREN**

The London Safeguarding Children Partnership Procedures (April 2025) contain guidance in the form of a Protocol to assist professionals in identifying where children and young people's sexual relationships may be abusive, and the children and young people may need the provision of protection or additional services.

Under the Sexual Offences Act 2003 children under the age of 13 are considered of insufficient age to give consent to any sexual activity. For this reason, all cases of children under the age of 13 who are believed to be or have been engaged in sexual activity must be referred to MAST. Penetrative sexual activity represents a potential case of rape (rape is penetration of any orifice by a male penis).

Whilst sexual activity for children under the age of 16 remains illegal, 13 –16-year-olds may be deemed competent to give consent. However, for all children aged 13 through to their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, concerns relating to risk of harm in the form of possible abuse, coercion, exploitation or neglect must be referred to the MAST.

## **CHILD PROTECTION CONFERENCES**

If an Initial Child Protection Conference is convened following an investigation, it is essential that the school is represented by someone who has informed knowledge of the child. This would normally be the Designated Safeguarding Lead. It may be appropriate for other staff involved with the child in the school to attend but this should only be on a need to attend basis. The school should also provide a written report to the conference in accordance with the format provided by Children's Social Care.

Parents will usually be invited to attend Child Protection Conferences and will have access to any written report. If a member of staff has information that they feel unable to share with the parents/carers, they should contact the chair of the conference prior to the meeting.

## **MONITORING CHILDREN WHO ARE THE SUBJECT OF A CHILD PROTECTION PLAN (CPP) AND THE CORE GROUP**

If at the Initial Child Protection Conference, it is decided that a child is at risk of significant harm then the child will be made the subject of a Child Protection Plan (CPP). The school will be officially notified and given the name of the key worker who will be a Social Worker from the Local Authority in which the child lives.

It is also likely that the school will be asked to nominate an appropriate member of staff to participate as part of the Core Group that monitors and liaises closely about the progress of the action plan in the CPP and the child's wellbeing.

It is particularly important to closely monitor the attendance and well-being of pupils who are the subject of CPPs. The key worker must be notified as soon as attendance starts to decline or if there are other concerns including in relation to actions discussed and agreed at the Child Protection Conference and specified in the Child Protection Plan. There must be close and continuous liaison with the key worker, which should include school's attendance at Core Group and other meetings.

When a child is the subject of a statutory plan and/or the case is open to an allocated social worker then any new or additional concerns about the child's wellbeing must be reported directly to the allocated social worker in the first instance. The school/setting must keep a full written record of events, discussions, decisions, and actions including all related communications.

## **STAFF FROM EXTERNAL SUPPORT SERVICES WORKING WITH SCHOOLS/SETTINGS**

**Including** After-School Club Staff, Attendance & Welfare Advisors, Careers Advisors, Educational Psychologists, Behaviour Specialists, Librarians, Support for Learning Practitioners, School Social Workers, Home Tutors, Home School Liaison Workers, Play Centre Staff, School Improvement Advisors, Study Support Staff and Youth Workers.

Actual or suspected abuse might be brought to or come to the attention of a member of staff from a support service when they are working in a school. In such a situation they must ensure that the matter is brought to the attention of the Designated Safeguarding Lead at the school/setting so that the matter can be reported to the Duty Social Worker in the MAST

If the Designated Safeguarding Lead decides not to report the matter to the Duty Social Worker but the member of staff remains concerned then they should consult their own service's Designated Safeguarding Lead or, if this is not possible, telephone the Duty Social Worker directly.

## **CONCERNS ARISING DURING HOME VISITS OR OFFICE BASED INTERVIEWS**

If a child makes a direct allegation or a member of staff suspects that a child may have been injured or has any concerns about the child's wellbeing, they must make a written record of the concern and any explanations given by the child or parents/carers. They should then contact their Designated Safeguarding Lead or the Duty Social Worker without delay. No attempt should be made to carry out an investigation.

If the concern is after office hours and it is believed the child may be at immediate risk the Children's Social Care Emergency Out of Hours Duty Team or the Police should be contacted without delay.

## **PARENTS ARRIVING TO COLLECT A CHILD WHEN AFFECTED BY ALCOHOL OR SUBSTANCE MISUSE**

If a parent/carer arrives at a school/setting to collect their child and it is thought that they are suffering from the adverse effects of misuse of alcohol or other substances, a decision needs to be taken regarding whether the child's safety may be placed at risk by releasing the child to the parent/carer. Parents/carers cannot normally be prevented from taking their own children but if it is believed that the child would be placed at serious risk then Headteachers can intervene to ensure the child's safety. The Headteacher could try to reason with the parent/carer and,

for example, could assist the parent/carer in contacting another adult who was in a suitable position to collect and look after the child.

The incident should be recorded in the school's safeguarding record system. The Designated Safeguarding Lead should consider completing a full Early Help Assessment form with the parent and possibly get help for them from local drug and alcohol services, accessed through the Primary Care Trust. If the incident occurs more than once or the school has additional safeguarding concerns about the child and family, then advice and guidance should be sought from MAST.

If a school feels the child is at risk of significant harm from the parent/carer then they should immediately contact the MAST to get advice (or the Children's Social Care Emergency Out of Hours Duty Team or the Police if after normal office hours).

## **CHILDREN NOT COLLECTED FROM SCHOOL/SETTING**

Where children are uncollected at the end of the school day whether due to the parents/carers being unavoidably delayed for a prolonged period or due to all efforts to contact the parents/carers being unsuccessful and there is serious concern about safeguarding their welfare (as opposed to children where the parents/carers are just late in collecting them) then it is essential that the protection of the welfare of the child is the priority.

Where parents/carers do not collect a child from a school on time staff should make a record of this using the school's safeguarding record system. If the problem is repeated then the parents/carers should be asked to cooperate in the completion of an assessment on the Early Help Assessment form, so that the school can work with the parent/carer to find solutions to the problem.

If the parent/carer has contacted the school/setting to explain reasons for lateness then the school should make arrangements for the child to be able to safely remain there to allow time for the parent/carer to get there or for them to arrange for another, known, responsible adult to collect their child.

In the event that there is no contact at all from the parents/carers or there is good reason to believe that the parent/carer would not be in a fit state to look after their child and there is serious concern about safeguarding their welfare (as opposed to children where the parents are just late in collecting them), staff should telephone the MAST to get advice (or the Children's Social Care Emergency Out of Hours Duty Team or the Police if after normal office hours) as detailed in Appendix. 1.

## **CONCERNS ABOUT RESPONSES TO REFERRALS/NEED FOR FURTHER ADVICE**

Any concern about a lack of response from the MAST or about the quality of the advice given should be escalated to the MAST Group Manager or the Service Head in accordance with the [Tower Hamlets Multi-Agency Escalation and Resolution Policy](#).

When referrals are progressed through to Assessment & Intervention (A&I) in Children's Social Care and the referrer is concerned about a lack of response or the type of response then the referrer should discuss this with the appropriate Team Manager/Duty Manager for Assessment & Intervention (A&I) in Children's Social Care.

If this proves difficult or unsatisfactory then the referrer should ask to speak to the Service Head – Assessment & Intervention.

In the event that the situation continues to be unsatisfactory the referrer can ask to speak to the Divisional Director – Children's Social Care.

Where a situation is acute and a practical response from Children's Social Care is not forthcoming then the referrer can contact the Police Child Abuse Investigation Team (020 8217 6484). The Police Child Abuse Investigation Team will then contact the Assessment & Intervention Team in Children's Social Care to discuss the matter and how it should be dealt with.

In case of any difficulty and the referrer is unsure what to do then they should call the Duty Social Worker for further assistance.

Where there is particular concern about how cases are being dealt with despite the steps detailed above having been followed then the Designated Safeguarding Lead can also discuss any ongoing concerns with the Education Safeguarding Service Manager or the Service Head of the Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Service.

## **ESCALATING CONCERNS ABOUT CHILD PROTECTION**

If you are worried about the initial response from the MAST and feel a different response is needed, then you may escalate your concerns as follows in accordance with the [Tower Hamlets Safeguarding Children Partnership's Escalation Policy](#):

MAST



Team Manager – MAST or Assessment & Intervention (Group Manager: Cindy Abbey)



Service Manager – MAST & Assessment & Intervention (Habon Ibrahim-Osman)



Director – Supporting Families (Susannah Beasley-Murray)

Where there is particular concern about the progress of cases involving allegations against members of staff then the Headteacher/Manager/Chair of Governors or LA Officer with responsibility for the setting should contact:

Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) – Melanie Benzie - 020 7364 0677

Should the LADO not be available then the following can be contacted:

- Head of Service, Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Service – Geraldine O'Donnell, 020 7364 6030

### **SAFEGUARDING TRAINING FOR SCHOOLS AND SETTINGS - Designated Safeguarding Lead for Schools and Education Settings Accreditation Guidance**

To receive or renew DSL accreditation it is required that a minimum of 2 days of safeguarding training is completed every two years. For **initial** accreditation as the DSL in a school or education setting in Tower Hamlets it is required that the following courses offered by Tower Hamlets SCP are attended:

- The bespoke 2-day safeguarding course for new Designated Safeguarding Leads and Deputy DSLs facilitated by Tower Hamlets Education Safeguarding Service (THESS)

When seeking to renew DSL accreditation, it is recommended that at least one of the courses/topics in the following list be attended as part of the training requirement; however, this list is by no means exhaustive:

- THESS DSL Renewal Safeguarding Training
- Neglect
- Domestic Abuse
- Impact of the Toxic Trio on Families: Drug Misuse, Domestic Abuse and Mental Health
- Impact of Parental Mental Health
- Safeguarding Children from Exploitation
- Prevent
- Child Sexual Abuse
- Self-Harm
- Online Safety
- Trauma informed approach
- Restorative practice

Whole School certified INSET training on Safeguarding and certified attendance at the termly forums of the Tower Hamlets School DSLs can also count towards meeting the 2-day safeguarding training requirement for re-accreditation.

For further information, queries and requests related to bespoke Safeguarding training contact:

Tower Hamlets Education Safeguarding Service:

Tel: 020 7364 3431 or email: [THESS@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:THESS@towerhamlets.gov.uk)

## **Appendix 1: Contact Information**

### **Mult-Agency Support Team (MAST)**

**020 7364 5006 (Options 2 or 3)**

Extension Numbers: 5606 / 5601 / 5358 / 7796 / 3342 / 7828 / 6469 / 3181

(9.00am to 5.00pm)

Child Protection Advice Line 020 7364 3444

### **Local Authority Designated Officer**

Email:

**020 7364 0677**

[LADO@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:LADO@towerhamlets.gov.uk)

### **Children's Social Care Emergency**

**Out of Hours Duty Team (5.00pm onwards)**

**020 7364 5006 -**

**choose Option 3**