

Safeguarding Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)



Presented by Lorna Ponambalum

About me



- Designated Safeguarding Lead, Senior Leadership and School Governor for over 20 years
- Currently a part time senior leader for Inclusion and DSL in a North London Primary School
- Trustee for a leading youth charity
- Content writer for leading national online safeguarding provider
- Safeguarding Consultant for Premier Education Group

Aims of the session

- **The unique vulnerabilities of students with SEND in safeguarding context**
- **Adapting safeguarding policies and procedures to meet the needs of SEND students**
- **Best practice for communicating effectively with SEND students and safeguarding issues**
- **Strategies for involving parents and external agencies**

Please note – Warning

The content covered in this course can be triggering for some. It may remind them of past experiences such as when they were young and may have suffered abuse or as an adult who failed to take action when they suspected a child was suffering abuse.

If this applies to you it is important to seek help by talking to someone who is experienced in offering support such as:

Samaritans www.samaritans.org or telephone 116 123

**NAPAC National Association for People Abused in
Childhood <https://napac.org.uk/> or telephone 0808 801 0331**

The Survivors Trust <https://www.thesurvivorstrust.org/> 0808 801 0818

**The NSPCC <https://www.nspcc.org.uk> or call national helpline 0808
800 5000**

Definition of a child with special educational needs

“A child of compulsory school age or a young person has a learning difficulty or disability if he or she:

- has a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age, or
- has a disability which prevents or hinders him or her from making use of facilities of a kind generally provided for others of the same age in mainstream schools or mainstream post-16 institutions.”

[SEND code of practice: 0 to 25 years - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25-years)

Definition of a child with a disability

A child has a disability if they have “a physical or mental impairment, and the impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on [their] ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.”

[Equality Act 2010 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15)



- 6% of children with SEND were unhappy with their safety, compared to 4% of children without SEND.
- Over a third of children with SEND (36%) said they often, always or 'some of the time' felt lonely, compared to 23% of other children.
- 6% of children missing education have an education, health and care plan for special needs, compared to 4% of pupils nationally. They are also more than twice as likely to have a child protection plan.

[Experiences of children with SEND | Children's Commissioner for England](#)
childrenscommissioner.gov.uk

More stats

Children with SEND are:

- 3.8 times more likely to be neglected or physically abused
- 3.1 times more likely to be sexually abused
- 3.9 times more likely to be emotionally abused
- 31% of children with SEND suffer abuse compared with 9% of the rest of the population
- Children with SEND are also at higher risk of experiencing multiple abuses and of enduring multiple episodes of abuse

P M Sullivan, J F Knutson, 2000

Pupils' exclusion 'trauma' revealed as some schools 'remove special needs students to protect results'

Parents discourage reprisals over SEND school abuse



Restrained and scared - the £100k schools failing vulnerable children



JO ADNITT/BBC

Leah was repeatedly restrained at her independent special school

Pupil abuse in special school secure rooms filmed on CCTV

© 14 October 2021



GOOGLE

Special school pupils 'tortured' in calming rooms, BBC investigation finds

© 30 April



Kaylea Titford: Neglected teen left to die alone at home by parents



[Kaylea Titford: Parents killed girl by letting
her become obese - BBC News](#)

Children with special educational needs, disabilities or health issues

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Statutory guidance for schools and colleges

Paragraph 202.

Children with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) or certain medical or physical health conditions can face additional safeguarding challenges both online and offline. Governing bodies and proprietors should ensure their child protection policy reflects the fact that additional barriers can exist when recognising abuse, neglect and exploitation in this group of children. These can include:

- assumptions that indicators of possible abuse such as behaviour, mood and injury relate to the child's condition without further exploration
- these children being more prone to peer group isolation or bullying (including prejudice-based bullying) than other children
- the potential for children with SEND or certain medical conditions being disproportionately impacted by behaviours such as bullying, without outwardly showing any signs
- communication barriers and difficulties in managing or reporting these challenges
- cognitive understanding – being unable to understand the difference between fact and fiction in online content and then repeating the content/behaviours in schools or colleges or the consequences of doing so.

Children with special educational needs, disabilities or health issues

Paragraph 203.

Any reports of abuse involving children with SEND will therefore require close liaison with the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) and the special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) or the named person with oversight for SEND in a college.

Keeping children safe in education 2024

**Statutory guidance for schools and
colleges**

Children with special educational needs, disabilities or health issues

Paragraph 204.

Schools and colleges should consider extra pastoral support and attention for these children, along with ensuring any appropriate support for communication is in place. Further information can be found in the department's:

- **SEND Code of Practice 0 to 25 years**, and
- **Supporting Pupils at School with Medical Conditions**.

And from specialist organisations such as:

- The Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information and Support Services (**SENDIASS**). SENDIASS offer information, advice and support for parents and carers of children and young people with SEND. All local authorities have such a service: Find your local IAS service (councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk)
- **Mencap** - Represents people with learning disabilities, with specific advice and information for people who work with children and young people
- **NSPCC** - Safeguarding children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and NSPCC - Safeguarding child protection/deaf and disabled children and young people

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Statutory guidance for schools and colleges

Children with SEND - Increased vulnerabilities

Children and young people with special educational needs are at the highest risk of abuse.

There are many reasons why this group are vulnerable to abuse. This includes:

- **Communication barriers** may mean that a child or young person cannot share or disclose abuse they are experiencing. They may also rely on the person who is abusing them to help them to communicate.
- **Assumptions** that indicators of possible abuse such as behaviour, mood and injury relate to the child's condition without further exploration.
- Increased **isolation from** peers.
- Reduced **access to sex and relationship teaching** making it less likely the child or young person will recognise they are being abused.
- Increased **dependency on others** to fulfil their daily lives including a need for intimate care.
- Increased **bullying** without outwardly showing concerns.

Can you provide
some of the reasons?



Task

- Lets look back at paragraph 202 of Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Spend 5 minutes in groups of 2/3/4s
- How does your school address the additional barriers facing children with SEND?
- Use the 5 statements from paragraph 202 of KCSIE

05:00



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05:00

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Policy and Procedures



- All schools should have a designated safeguarding lead who will support staff with safeguarding and liaise with agencies such as Social Care.
- Your school or academy's safeguarding policy and procedures should outline how children and young people with additional vulnerabilities will be supported.
- The special educational needs coordinator should work closely with the designated safeguarding lead.

Policy and Procedures



Guidance should include:

- how staff will respond to concerns regarding a child or young person
- how concerns regarding safeguarding will be reported
- what risks children and young people might face at home and within the school
- how staff and volunteers will be recruited to ensure that children and young people are safeguarded from potential harm
- how all staff and volunteers will be supported to recognise the signs of abuse and harm.

Policy and Procedures

Anyone who suspects a child is being harmed or receives a disclosure should take detailed notes in order to support any referrals to be made.



Notes should include:

- child or young person's details
- details of any disclosures made including dates and times
- where the abuse is taking place.

Where children with SEND have a Child in Need or Child Protection Plan already in place, the responsible social worker should ensure social care assessments are met and aligned with the EHC needs assessment where possible.

Best practice to ensure effective safeguarding of children with SEND

- An inclusive curriculum that is relevant and appropriate to meet the needs of all learners.
- Outstanding quality first social and emotional teaching through our whole school PSHE programme to teach children about how to keep themselves safe.
- Explicit teaching of all social and emotional skills through the PSHE and life skills curriculum
- Place2Be
- Trauma informed approach to Behaviour Management
- Zones of Regulation
- Use of non-verbal methods of communication to communicate when help is needed
- Worry boxes/jars for children to communicate with staff using their chosen method
- Inclusion boxes for all classes Year 2 – 6
- Daily 'check-in' sessions for the most vulnerable children
- Establish links with external agencies (e.g. Early Help, CAMHS, Safer Schools Office) to enable rapid identification of changes in behaviour and presentation and enable effective early intervention
- Weekly multiagency group meeting for vulnerable children

Task

Spend 5 minutes in groups of 2/3/4s

Discuss what strategies that you use at your school to ensure effective safeguarding of children with SEND



05:00

Scenario

12-year-old Gemma

- You are Gemma's tutor
- Gemma is a 12-year-old girl with learning needs who since starting at school has had two close friends with similar needs to herself.
- Over the last few weeks Gemma has been seen spending time with a larger group of girls in the school and she has been reported for disruptive behaviour on several occasions.
- A member of staff overhears one of the girls that she has been spending time with telling Gemma that she could be friends with them, but she must do what they ask.
- How would you deal with this situation?
- What are you worried about?

Response to scenario

- Gemma's tutor recognises that this is not normal behaviour for Gemma and talks to her individually to discuss the changes in her behaviour.
- Gemma is reluctant to tell her tutor but eventually shares with the teacher that the girls that she has been spending time with had approached her and told her that she could be friends with them, but she must do what they ask. They have been encouraging her to be disruptive in class and have taken her lunch allowance so they will be friends with her.
- The tutor recognises that there are elements of child-on-child that Gemma has not recognised because of her learning needs. The tutor arranges for Gemma to spend time with her original friendship group.
- The tutor reports the concern to the Designated Safeguarding Lead and the SENDCo
- The behaviour of the other girls is managed by the school using the behaviour policy and procedures and it is explained to them why their behaviour is wrong and the harm that they could have caused.

Working with Parents of Children with SEND

- Effective working with families is key to supporting the safeguarding of children with SEND.
- But remember – “staff should always act in the best interests of the child”
- We must not allow our professional judgement to be clouded at the expense of the relationship with the parent.
- We need to remember that abuse perpetrators, including parents, can potentially groom the adults around them, including the professional working with their children
- Remain professionally curious
- Equally disguised compliance is not reduced by being the parent of a child with SEND
- At the same time, professionals are not always open to listening to parents, particularly when their perception of their child varies from that of professionals.
- Children will behave differently at home, but often this is disregarded.
- A parents’ account of their children’s behaviour can lead to safeguarding concerns and judgements about parenting.



Working with Parents of Children with SEND

- Weekly parent inclusion surgeries
- Working group for parents of children with SEND – meet termly
- Encourage parents of children with SEND to become parent volunteers
- Transparent Safeguarding policy
- Actively listen to parent concerns and find a solution
- Seek advice from other professionals if unsure



Useful Resources

[Keeping children safe in education 2024.pdf \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

[Supporting practice in tackling child sexual abuse - CSA Centre](#)

[PACE Code C 2019 \(accessible\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

[Searching, screening and confiscation at school - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

[Working together to improve school attendance \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

[Human Rights Act 1998 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)

[EqualityAct2010:guidance\(www.gov.uk\)](#)

[https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-exclusion](#)

[Relationships Education and the Relationships and Sex Education](#)

[Information sharing: advice for practitioners \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

[https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statutory-guidance-schools#safeguarding-children-and-young-people](#)

My contact details



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Thank you!