



SAFEGUARDING UPDATE

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What schools need to know about the proposed mandatory reporting duty

As schools continue to play a vital role in safeguarding children, it is important to be aware of new developments. The NSPCC has launched a **free series** of webinars aimed at helping education settings prepare for the forthcoming statutory duty to report child sexual abuse.

Why this matters

- **Legislation:** The forthcoming duty stems from the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) recommendations. Under the proposed changes in the Crime and Policing Bill, certain professionals will have a statutory obligation to report known or suspected child sexual abuse.
- **Scope:** The duty applies to people in “key roles” who work with children and young people, and there will also be a new criminal offence of obstructing someone from making a report.
- **Role of schools:** As a school setting, you will be among the organisations where staff must understand what the duty means, how to respond, and how to embed appropriate policies and procedures.

What the NSPCC webinars cover

The content includes:

- **The story so far:** what has led to the proposed duty, and current status.
- **Who the new duty will apply to:** which roles, which organisations.
- **What must be reported:** definitions of child sexual abuse (physical contact and non-contact, online and offline) and how that aligns with your safeguarding responsibilities.
- **What stops children speaking out:** acknowledging barriers and how schools can help lower them.
- **The process for reporting:** what an organisation should expect, how to be ready.
- **Survivor stories and learning:** ensuring the training is grounded in lived experience.
- **Sector-specific sessions:** There is a version tailored for schools and colleges, as well as versions for sport, physical activity, and voluntary/community sectors.

Key take-aways for schools

Here are practical points your school should consider in light of this upcoming duty:

- **Audit your current safeguarding/reporting procedures:** Do your existing policies cover online abuse, non-contact abuse, child-on-child abuse? Are staff aware of when and how to report?
- **Clarify roles and responsibilities:** Who in your setting is designated to receive disclosures or concerns? Who will make the mandatory report (when required)? Ensure clarity among teaching, pastoral, extracurricular, and after-school staff.
- **Training and awareness:** Make sure all relevant staff (and ideally governors/trustees) are aware of the impending duty and what it means. The NSPCC webinars are a useful resource.
- **Communication to children and parents:** Ensure children know how to raise concerns safely and that parents understand the school’s role in safeguarding and reporting.
- **Record-keeping and evidence:** Ensure your logging of concerns, disclosures and actions taken is robust. The proposed duty may require timely and accurate reporting.
- **Review partnerships and contracted services:** If you work with external providers (sports clubs, after-school clubs, visiting tutors), ensure they are aware of the duty and align with your safeguarding expectations.
- **Develop or update your action plan:** Since this statutory duty is coming, your school should have a plan for how to incorporate it: timeline, responsibilities, communications, training, policy updates.

How to access the webinars

- The webinars are **free, on-demand, and last around 60 minutes**.
- There is a session specifically for schools and colleges.
- Once watched, there are further resources provided to support embedding the learning.
- **Technical note:** The webinars work best using Chrome, Edge or Safari (not Firefox). They are compatible with PCs, Macs and iPads but mobile support is limited.

To access the free webinars:

<https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/training/mandatory-reporting-webinars>

What schools need to know: Bullying on social media

Online spaces, and especially social media, have changed the landscape of bullying and schools need to be ahead of the curve. Below are the key themes, implications and what your setting can do today.

1. The nature of the issue

Social media bullying is often more pervasive than traditional face-to-face bullying: it can follow the young person home, happen outside school hours, spread rapidly and feel inescapable. **According to Childline:**

- **Platforms like Instagram, Twitter, WhatsApp, Tumblr etc** host bullying/harassment via direct messages, posts, images, videos or anonymous accounts.
- **For example, on Instagram:** Users can be harassed via posts or direct messages; the advice includes blocking, reporting and changing usernames if necessary.
- **On WhatsApp:** even if a user deletes a message or an image, someone else may already have saved or screenshotted it.
- **On video-chat or anonymous chat sites** (e.g. Omegle, Discord): Users might not know who’s watching; content can be recorded or screenshot without consent.

2. Why this matters for schools

- **Around-the-clock:** Unlike bullying in the school playground, social media means the risk doesn’t stop when the school bell rings.
- **Larger audience, permanent footprint:** A post, video or image on social media can be amplified, reshared and hard to fully delete.
- **Psychological impact:** The sense of being ‘always on’ and vulnerable can contribute to anxiety, self-isolation, reduced self-esteem and other negative outcomes.
- **Complex to respond:** Because incidents often happen off-site or outside school hours via technology, the school’s role may feel less direct though still crucial.

3. Key focus areas for your school

Here are some of the specific actions and policy areas your school should review:

A. Review anti-bullying/e-safety policies

- Ensure the school’s anti-bullying policy explicitly covers online social media bullying (not just face-to-face).
- Make sure parents/carers and pupils alike understand that posts, messages or images shared online that are humiliating, threatening or exclusionary count as bullying.
- Confirm that there is clarity on how the school will respond when bullying occurs outside normal hours via social media but impacts the school community.

B. Awareness and training

- **Staff:** Ensure your teaching, pastoral and IT teams know the signs of social media bullying, how to investigate it, and what the school response should include.
- **Pupils:** Build digital-citizenship education into your curriculum. For example: how to safely use apps, how to block/report, what to do if they’re being targeted. Childline emphasises “you can block, report or change username” on various platforms.
- **Parents/Carers:** Inform them of common risks (sending images, group chats, anonymous accounts) and encourage open conversations at home.

C. Practical “What to do” guidance

From the Childline resource, useful advice you can pass on:

- Encourage pupils being bullied to block/report the person(s) across the platform.
- Emphasise that even if the message/image is deleted, it may have been copied or screenshotted already (so evidence should be preserved if possible).
- Make sure they know they can turn to a trusted adult, the school’s designated safeguarding lead, or a helpline like Childline.
- Remind them not to retaliate or respond aggressively, which may escalate the situation.

D. Monitoring, recording and responding

- Establish how the school will monitor online bullying incidents when they become known (e.g. from pupils, parents or staff).
- Ensure that your school has a straightforward reporting mechanism for pupils and staff to raise concerns about social media/online bullying.
- **Safeguarding:** Be ready to act if the social media bullying involves sexual images, threats of self-harm, or grooming behaviours.
- Review how the school liaises with parents and external agencies when an incident spans online and offline.

4. Five-point action plan for this term

- Audit your school’s anti-bullying and e-safety policies this term: Do they cover social media, private messaging, image sharing, anonymous accounts?
- Brief staff (pastoral, IT, safeguarding, form tutors) about the “social media bullying” risks and your escalation pathway.
- Run a pupil session (via PSHE, tutor time or assembly) on social media safety, what bullying looks like, what to do if it happens.
- **Engage parents/carers:** send home a letter or hold a short online session about social media use, privacy settings, reporting blocking etc.
- **Establish evidence/incident protocols:** Ensure staff know how to record online bullying incidents (screenshots, date/time, platform) and what follow-up will be taken.

Read:

<https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/bullying-abuse-safety/types-bullying/bullying-social-media/>

Forthcoming free safeguarding webinars for Autumn term 2025

Domestic abuse - Tuesday 21st October

Autumn term 2

Radicalisation - Tuesday 11th November

Child-on-child sexual abuse - Tuesday 18th November

Sexism and sexual harassment - Tuesday 25th November

Child sexual exploitation (CSE) - Tuesday 2nd December

County lines - Tuesday 9th December

Trauma - Tuesday 16th December

Just a reminder that all resources will be available in our **Safeguarding CPD Library**, where new recordings will be uploaded each week throughout this term.

Wishing you a wonderful half-term break!

It’s time for everyone in the education sector to take a well-deserved break. Whether you’re planning a relaxing holiday or simply enjoying some downtime, I hope you return feeling refreshed and recharged.

The newsletter will return on Tuesday, 4th November. Until then, enjoy the rest, relaxation, and the opportunity to recharge!

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