

CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19): INFORMATION FOR GOVERNING BOARDS



NGA has made its [GOLDline advice service](#), provided to GOLD governing board members, available to all governing boards that have questions relating to governing during the COVID-19 period. You can contact GOLDline by emailing gold@nga.org.uk or by calling **0121 237 3782**. NGA GOLD members are asked to make a request through the usual route.



1 SPECIFIC SAFEGUARDING GUIDANCE FOR THE COVID-19 PERIOD

- The Department for Education (DfE) has published [interim safeguarding guidance](#) for the COVID-19 period. The guidance is relevant to all schools.
- The interim guidance is clear that [Keeping Children Safe in Education \(KCSIE\)](#) remains the overarching statutory safeguarding guidance that schools follow. The purpose of the interim guidance is to support governing boards, proprietors, senior leadership teams and designated safeguarding leads (DSL) so they can continue to have appropriate regard to KCSIE and keep their children safe during the period that schools and colleges are operating in a way that is fundamentally different to business as usual.



2 REVISING THE SCHOOL OR TRUST'S CHILD PROTECTION POLICY TO REFLECT NEW ARRANGEMENTS

- An action for schools and trusts arising from the interim guidance is to review and revise their child protection policies to accurately reflect new arrangements in response to COVID-19. The interim guidance refers to the issues the revised child protection policy should reflect, such as DSL (and deputy) availability and what staff and volunteers should do if they have any concerns about a child.
- Revisions made to the child protection policy should also reflect any updated advice given by the team of Safeguarding Partners who work collaboratively to strengthen the child protection and safeguarding system in your local area: the local authority; the clinical commissioning group for any area that falls under the local authority; and the chief officer of police for any area that falls under the local authority.
- In all likelihood the DSL (or deputy) will manage the task of reviewing and revising the child protection policy. The interim guidance says that in some cases drafting an annex/addendum that summarises any key COVID-19 related changes might be more effective than re-writing and re-issuing the whole policy.
- Browne Jacobson, the approved legal partner of NGA, has produced a template annex to the child protection policy, which covers all statutory obligations outlined in the interim guidance. The template annex is available to download from the [COVID information and guidance](#) page on our website.



3 WHAT SHOULD GOVERNING BOARDS DO?

- Governing boards have a responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Their duties, as set out in part 2 of KCSIE, continue even when schools and colleges are operating in a way that is fundamentally different to business as usual. It is therefore essential that governing boards make sure as far as possible that their schools continue to be safe places for children.
- The [DfE advises](#) that school leaders should stay in touch with their governing boards during the period that schools and colleges are operating in a way that is fundamentally different to business as usual. This includes providing information on the welfare of staff and pupils, so that the board can retain a strategic overview of the situation and the school.
- NGA recommends that, as a priority, either the safeguarding governor/trustee, chair or other member of the board as appropriate makes contact with the school leader and/ or DSL and receives an update on the safeguarding arrangements made in response to COVID-19. This would include any revisions made to the child protection policy that can be approved as a chair's action prior to a meeting of the governing board. It would also include the arrangements in place to keep children not physically attending the school or college safe, especially online.
- NGA recommends that the update given by the school leader and/ or DSL is shared with the governing board via its normal communication channels.
- NGA's [guidance for governing boards on business continuity and holding virtual meetings](#) during the COVID-19 period advises that non-urgent business is delayed and that governing boards restrict their agendas to key issues such as monitoring the wellbeing and welfare of pupils, staff and stakeholders.
- The agenda item on safeguarding should cover the retrospective approval of policies and procedures and give governors/trustees the opportunity to seek clarity and ask questions on the following:
 - the impact of safeguarding arrangements and policies currently in place;
 - DSL arrangements and support available to the DSL;
 - the procedure for raising safeguarding issues and concerns;
 - any issues and concerns reported;
 - how staff and volunteers are made aware of the current arrangements and changes to policies/procedures and are kept up to date as they are revised;
 - the support given to staff and volunteers that takes into account increased vulnerability and risk;
 - the safeguards in place that prevent unsuitable people from gaining access to children, and
 - the arrangements in place to keep children not physically attending the school or college safe, especially online, and how concerns about these children should be progressed.