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Child Protection for International Schools

Learning about abuse can be distressing and, for some, it may remind them of past experiences; for example, as someone who experienced abuse or as an adult who didn't act when they suspected a child was suffering abuse. If this applies to you, it may be helpful to talk to someone who is experienced in providing support.

- **Child Helpline International**: https://www.childhelplineinternational.org/child-helplines/child-helpline-network
- **The INHOPE Foundation**: www.inhope.org

Please find out about the support agencies available in your own country.

Welcome to your EduCare course on Child Protection for International Schools.

The purpose of the course is to:

- raise your awareness of abuse and neglect
- help you to recognise early signs that might indicate a problem
- show you how to take action if you know or suspect that a child or young person needs help.

Module 1 – Child Development

In this module we will cover:

- the difference between safeguarding and child protection
- children's developmental needs
- developmental milestones
- positive and negative influences on child development
- working in a child-centred way.

Please note

It is important to be aware that not all countries have legislation in relation to child protection. It is the duty of the 'Designated' senior person for Child Protection to establish what support services are available for children in relation to safeguarding and child protection in the specific country in which you are operating.

The course refers to 'children and young people' which includes babies, toddlers, infants, children and teenagers from birth right up to the age of 18.

This course references the word 'school', but it is equally applicable to pre-school settings and colleges.

International Task Force on Child Protection

In 2014 the International Task Force on Child Protection was established. They works with international schools and associations as well as transnational government agencies, setting out clear objectives to address child protection within the international school community.

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Further information for British International Schools

The statutory guidance in England that contains information on what schools and colleges must do to keep children safe is called 'Keeping Children Safe in Education'. All staff should read and fully understand at least Part One of the guidance and those that work directly with children should also read and understand Annex A. Schools should also have an understanding of the statutory guidance 'Working together to safeguard children'.

The guidance is recommended by organisations such as COBIS because the principles work for children across the whole world. However, the legislation would not be statutory in countries outside the UK.

Safeguarding or child protection?

It is important to note the difference between the terms 'safeguarding' and 'child protection'.

The term **safeguarding** is what we do for ALL children and is linked to 'promoting welfare'.

Safeguarding can be defined as:

- protecting children from maltreatment
- preventing impairment of children's health or development
- ensuring children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care
- taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

It is schools' responsibility to make sure they operate in a way that minimises as much as possible the risk of abuse to children and young people.

UNICEF defines **child protection** as preventing and responding to violence, exploitation and abuse against children. This includes commercial exploitation, trafficking, child labour and harmful traditional practices such as female genital mutilation.
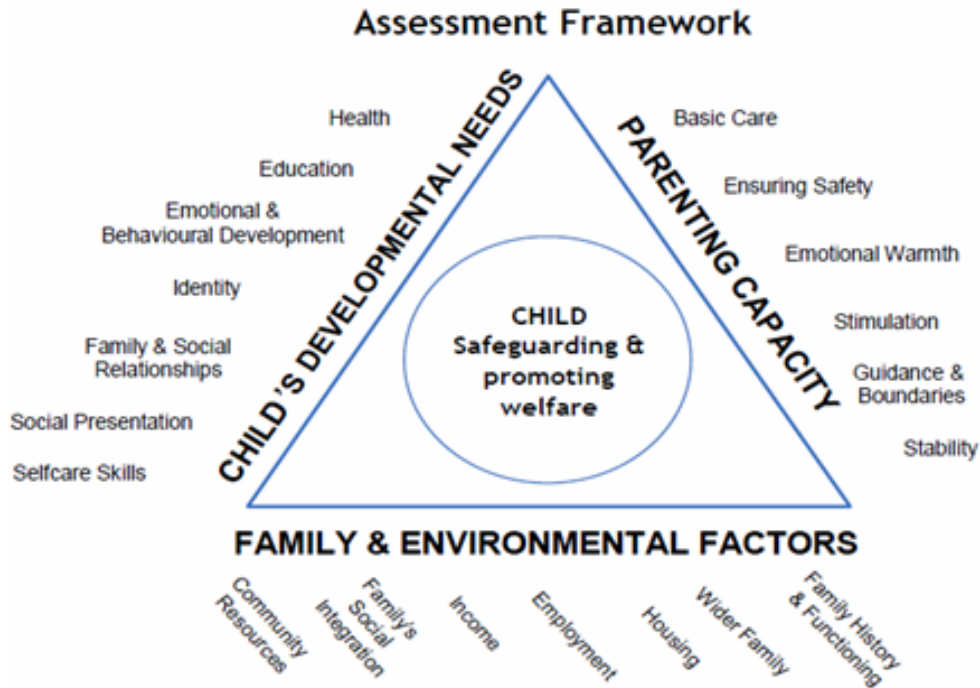
Child protection forms a part of safeguarding and promoting welfare. Effective child protection processes are an essential part of the wider work to safeguard and promote welfare; they also reduce the need for action to protect children from harm.

There should always be a whole school approach to safeguarding and child protection. This means involving everyone in the school, including the governors or proprietor, all staff, all the children and their parents or carers.

Children's developmental needs

How a child grows and develops is strongly influenced by the support and guidance of those around them, regardless of their nationality, culture or level of ability. A child should progress to reach their potential if their development needs are met, parenting capacity is stable and family and environmental factors are positive. As children grow, the extent to which these needs are met will shape the individual as a whole.

The Assessment Framework identifies seven areas of child development along which children should progress if they are to realise their potential and wellbeing.

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Assessment Framework

Health
Education
Emotional &
Behavioural Development
Identity
Family & Social
Relationships
Social Presentation
Selfcare Skills

CHILD'S DEVELOPMENTAL NEEDS

CHILD
Safeguarding &
promoting
welfare

PARENTING CAPACITY

Basic Care
Ensuring Safety
Emotional Warmth
Stimulation
Guidance &
Boundaries
Stability

FAMILY & ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

Community Resources
Family's Social Integration
Income
Employment
Housing
Wider Family
Family History & Functioning

1. **Health**
   This includes a child's growth and development as well as their physical and mental wellbeing. The child should have a nutritional diet, be able to exercise and receive appropriate healthcare when needed.

2. **Education**
   This covers all areas of a child's intellectual development which begins from birth.

3. **Emotional and behavioural development**
   This is about a child's emotional development and how this is reflected in their behaviour as they grow. It takes into account the child's temperament, and how well they adapt to change and respond to stress.

4. **Identity**
   This relates to the child's self-image and self-esteem and children having a positive sense of their individuality.

5. **Family and social relationships**
   This area is about the child's increasing ability to understand and share the feelings of another.

6. **Social presentation**
   This concerns the child's growing understanding of how their appearance, behaviour and abilities contribute to the way they are perceived by the outside world and the impression they create on others.

7. **Self-care skills**
   These include the child's developing emotional maturity and the communication skills that will help them become independent. In the early years, they include the practical skills of washing, dressing and feeding. For teenagers, they cover areas such as personal safety, sexual health and the ability to manage their own finances.

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As children grow, the extent to which these needs are met shapes the whole person. The Framework is one method professionals use to assess gaps in needs being met, and they will also assess the parents' capacity to provide care, as well as the influence of family and environmental factors.

There are substantial differences in cultural views about what constitutes good parenting and what constitutes abuse across the world. In some countries the hitting of children with sticks is legal (and/or socially acceptable), whereas in other countries this is illegal (and/or socially unacceptable).

Female genital mutilation (FGM) is illegal in many countries throughout the world. Despite this, it is still practised in many of these countries effectively with impunity. The practice of FGM crosses all income ranges. Most 'British' schools insist that parents and carers treat their children in accordance with British values.

Developmental Milestones

From the moment a child is born through to adulthood, their development can be measured through physical, emotional, social, intellectual and linguistic milestones.

All children and young people follow a similar pattern of development and the order in which they develop is approximately the same. However, every child develops at a different rate and they may not progress evenly across all the areas.

Of course, every child is an individual and children grow up in a variety of different circumstances including; for example, growing up with disabilities that affect communication, so there isn't a set template, but we are able to look at the main stages and broad developmental milestones.

It is important to be aware of the stages and typical progressions of development because abuse may slow or adversely affect a child's development and this should alert you to the possibility of abuse or neglect.

The order of development starts from the top down, beginning at the head and neck and gradually progresses downwards to the feet. Development also moves from the inner body to the outer body. Initially, children gain control of the muscles close to the torso and head. They then slowly gain more control of the outer muscles; for example, in the shoulders, upper arms and thighs, and finally the feet.

Children's linguistic progress begins with crying and making single-syllable sounds through to simple words and then complex sentences.

Children's emotional responses initially involve their whole body and gradually become more specific and focused as they get older. For example, a toddler having a tantrum will use their whole body to express emotion whereas an older child may express emotion only on their face.

Influences on development

Negative influences

Many factors can influence a child's development, including parents' or caregivers' own ability to meet their child's needs.

The following factors can have a negative impact on a child but also put the child at risk of serious harm.

- **Domestic abuse** – Children who live in a volatile household can experience physical and emotional damage, which can be long lasting.
- **Substance misuse** – Parents who are regularly involved with drug or alcohol misuse are less likely to be able to provide a safe, stable, stimulating environment.
- **Mental ill-health** – Parents who experience mental ill-health such as psychosis, may find it hard to encourage and provide emotional stability for a child.

This is known as the 'toxic trio'.

The Toxic Trio

The Toxic Trio is a term used by professionals to describe the issues of domestic abuse, mental ill-health and substance misuse. They are viewed as indicators which, if present, increase the risk of harm to children and young people. There have been many cases in which children have been exposed to long periods of 'the toxic trio' which have resulted in serious harm or loss of life.

Other risk factors

A child's development needs and development milestones can also be affected by:

- **Being a looked after child or young person**
  The needs of a looked after child are often extremely complex. 'Looked after' means being in the care of the State. Developing a positive, loving relationship with a parent or caregiver (often called secure attachments) can sometimes be difficult which will affect how they react emotionally to situations.

- **Unaccompanied asylum-seeking and refugee children**
  They are alone, in an unfamiliar country and at the end of what could have been a long, perilous and traumatic journey. Some of these children may have experienced exploitation or persecution in their home country or on their journey. Some may have been trafficked and/or exploited in other ways.

Positive influences on development

Having a stable, loving, safe environment will have a positive influence on a child or young person's development both physically and emotionally. Ensuring children have firm age-appropriate boundaries and encouraging and listening to them are also very important.

It has been shown that if children are unfortunate enough to experience any adverse factors they are more likely to be resilient in difficult conditions if they have had secure early attachments and a stable upbringing.

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A child-centred approach

Because you have regular or daily contact with the learners for whom you have a responsibility, you are well placed to notice their physical presentation, emotions and behaviours and when they may need help and support.

'Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is 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.' Keeping Children Safe in Education

It is essential that you play your part in helping to protect children by being aware that abuse exists and being prepared to take action should you suspect abuse. To do this you will need to learn more about abuse and what forms it can take.

A child-centred approach is also supported by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Children say they need:

- **Vigilance:** to have adults notice when things are troubling them.
- **Understanding and action:** to understand what is happening; to be heard and understood, and to have that understanding acted upon.
- **Stability:** to be able to develop an ongoing stable relationship of trust with those helping them.
- **Respect:** to be treated with the expectation that they are competent rather than not.
- Information and engagement: to be informed about and involved in procedures, decisions, concerns and plans.
- **Explanation:** to be informed of the outcome of assessments and decisions and reasons when their views have not met with a positive response.
- **Support:** to be provided with support in their own right, as well as a member of their family.
- **Advocacy:** to be provided with advocacy to assist them in putting forward their views.

Summary

In this module we have looked at child development and the factors that can influence it. We also covered the factors that can influence child development in a positive or negative way, as well as what children say they need.

By having an awareness of these areas, you will have a clearer understanding of when a child may need support.

You are now ready to complete the corresponding questionnaire.