



Child Protection Refresher for International Schools 2022

Module 3 – Creating a Culture of Safety

In this module we will cover:

- current safeguarding concerns
- creating a culture of safety
- culture
- safe working practice.

Current safeguarding concerns

Child sexual abuse material (CSAM)

Child sexual abuse material and images can be found on the internet platforms we use every day. These images are commonplace and can be found on mainstream social media and online gaming platforms.

In 2021, there were 85 million pictures and videos depicting child sexual abuse reported worldwide, many more will have gone unreported. Due to the COVID 19 pandemic children are spending more time in the digital world than ever before. A recent report from the Internet Watch Foundation reported a 64% increase in confirmed child sexual abuse images in 2021 compared to 2020. Seven in 10 instances involved children aged 11- 13 years.

There continues to be an increase in self-generated sexual images. Self-generated content includes images or videos featuring children under the age of 18 that are subsequently shared. Some images will be produced to share with a sexual or romantic partner, others are obtained through abusive and coercive measures or grooming. These images are shared and often reshared so the trauma will be ongoing.

Legislation

CSAM has different legal definitions depending on the country. Types of content that are illegal in some countries may not be in others, and so will have an impact on how law enforcement and reporting sites can deal with them. Content that does not depict nudity or explicit sexual activity may still be illegal if it sexualises a child. The definition of 'sexualise' differs from country to country. 'Sexualised' may refer to wearing age-inappropriate clothing or with inappropriate objects suggesting a sexually explicit setting or content depicting children aimed at stimulating other people's sexual arousal.

The detection and reporting of child sexual abuse material is key to help prevent abuse in real life and reassure the child who has experienced abuse that the images won't keep reappearing. Under no circumstances should you ever distribute images. If you receive any images of child abuse, you should consult your safeguarding lead. In many countries the act of sending an image or video, even to report it to a safeguarding lead is a criminal offence.

- Internet Watch Foundation
- International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children
- Inhope

Mental wellbeing

Despite growing awareness of mental health conditions, young people can often feel stigmatized and misunderstood. Children and young people may struggle to find the language they need to talk about how they are feeling and may feel that by speaking out they will be bullied and teased. Culture has the potential to influence how mental disorders are experienced, understood and addressed.

To begin to explore mental health, we must first understand what we mean by the term 'mental health'.

The World Health Organization defines mental health as:

A state of well-being in which the individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community.

A recent report from UNICEF has highlighted ongoing concerns and the impact mental health conditions can have.

An estimated 13 per cent of adolescents aged between 10-19 years live with a diagnosed mental health disorder, 40 percent of those having anxiety and depression. This is the tip of the iceberg as millions more will not have the confidence or support to talk openly.

The cost of not supporting children and young people can have dramatic implications. Suicide is the fifth most prevalent cause of death for boys and girls aged between 10 and 19 years.

Terminology

The terminology used to describe mental health problems varies; for example, mental illness, mental wellbeing, mental ill health and mental disorder are all terms frequently used.

The World Health Organization describes a mental health disorder as:

"A broad range of problems that have different symptoms. However, they are generally characterised by some combination of disturbed thoughts, emotions, behaviour and relationships with others. Examples are depression, anxiety, conduct disorders in children and schizophrenia."

What can you do?

Early intervention means being proactive rather than reactive. Staff should have the skills to spot signs and symptoms, as well as know what to do. Training can take various formats; for example, using local charities or online learning.

Remember, you are not expected to become an expert in mental health or be able to make a diagnosis.



A vital component in early intervention is knowing your pupils so that you can spot changes in their emotional presentation. These can be subtle.

Remember what you learnt in Module two.

- Be an active listener
- Be non-judgmental
- Use empathy
- Signpost to the mental wellbeing lead.

Remember you are there to offer initial support, and then seek professional support if needed.

Give pupils an opportunity to get involved. Help pupils put in place the things that work for them. This sends the message that it is okay to ask for help and reassures parents and carers that the mental health of their children is being treated seriously.

Training

The following websites provide easily accessible training:

- International MHFA Programs
The Mental Health First Aid qualification is beneficial for key pastoral staff.
- School Mental Health Specialist
This postgraduate qualification is aimed at staff who want to work more intensely with students who are experiencing mental wellbeing challenges.

Creating a culture of safety

We see the words 'creating a culture of safety' so often that sometimes the phrase can lack meaning or mean nothing more than a box-ticking exercise that ensures the required policies are in place. Creating a culture of safety means embedding safeguarding and child protection into everything the school does.

All children and young people have a right to feel safe in your school and their parents/carers also have a right to expect that their child will be safe in your school's care.

The International Task Force on Child Protection sets out the following principles for schools.

- All children have equal rights to be protected from harm and abuse.
- Everybody has a responsibility to support the protection of children.
- All schools have a duty of care to children enrolled in the school and those who are affected by the operations of the school.
- All actions on child protection are taken with the best interests of the child, which are paramount.

To ensure that these rights are fulfilled the school must operate within a culture of safety where safeguarding and promoting children's welfare is embedded into everything it does.

Embedding a culture of safety starts at the very top with the board of governors, trustees, senior managers, and school leaders pledging absolute commitment and support, and ensuring resources and training are available to make it happen throughout the school.



The school website should include details on how you keep children safe, including policy and how to report concerns. The content should include the schools' commitment to child protection. This helps inform parents, the public and can help to deter those with ill-intent from applying for a role within the school.

Key components

The key components of a school that operates within a culture of safety are:

- Strong safeguarding leadership that is evidenced by boards and trustees as well as senior staff.
- Safeguarding policy and procedures. The policy will detail the procedures for dealing with concerns about abuse, disclosures, and allegations. It should be clear who authorises the policy to demonstrate leadership.
- A designated safeguarding person, plus a deputy and contact numbers for out of hours to ensure there is always safeguarding help available. All names and contact details should be listed within the safeguarding policy.
- A whistle-blowing policy (often part of the safeguarding policy).
- An equality and diversity policy which helps prohibit discrimination and harassment. It will also detail arrangements that ensure immediate action is taken should the need arise.
- An anti-bullying policy which includes cyberbullying with clear procedures.
- An acceptable use of technology policy.
- Safer recruitment policy and procedures that embed safeguarding into all areas of the recruitment process.
- A code of conduct for all staff, volunteers and visitors. This should reference behaviour on and off school premises. The school should also have guidelines for appropriate and inappropriate behaviour of children towards adults and children towards children.
- A data protection policy. This policy should comply with data protection laws in your country to protect the children's well-being, both within the school, and with external agencies. In the case of a child transferring to another school or university, the policy for sharing the file should be clearly documented and understood.
- Involve children in each of these measures.
- Ensure children know how they should be treated and how they can raise concerns.

All documentation should be translated into the local language/s.

Compliance

Of course, the existence of designated safeguarding staff and having policies and procedures in place does not make for a safer school and so boards and managers must ensure that awareness remains high, and compliance is achieved at all times.

It is the responsibility of school leaders to create a climate and culture where students can thrive.

This can be achieved by:

- Boards, trustees and senior leaders setting standards and measures to be met, with action taken against non-compliance.
- Implementing safeguarding training for all staff that is updated and refreshed every year, plus training specifically on the school's own safeguarding policy and procedures. This will ensure that staff not only have an overall awareness but understand how to act within their own school.
- Making safeguarding an agenda item on every staff meeting so that staff have a vehicle to raise any concerns.
- Including an article in every staff newsletter.
- Safeguarding posters throughout the building that are visible to all.
- Having an area devoted to safeguarding on the intranet.

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- Regular supervision and monitoring of staff to ensure they are clear about their roles, responsibilities, and boundaries.
- An open-door approach where staff feel they can raise concerns about a young person or a colleague's behaviour.
- Staff who understand the importance of listening to learners (this should be part of the recruitment process and induction training).
- Have age-appropriate safeguarding learning programmes for students, linked to the social and emotional curriculum. Students should be encouraged to have an input and give feedback on this.
- Offer internal support for students such as counselling and peer mentoring schemes.

Culture

All staff within schools should understand the local laws and cultures of their country and the pupils it educates.

Some international settings may have limited external support available to them. There may be a lack of mental health or child protection services and counselling support.

Staff should be mindful that local laws may have criminalised certain mental health concerns and that safeguarding may be always investigated and dealt with by law enforcement and not support agencies.

A further cultural consideration is the behaviour of students. Prior to engaging the student in the appropriate communication style, ensure that you have considered the possibility of culture informing their behaviour.

For example

- In some European countries students may speak out and feel comfortable in giving their opinion, whereas students from many Asian countries may not be the same.
- In some regions of the world, it is impolite to look into the eyes of an adult.
- In the UK, not making eye contact when being spoken to is a sign of disrespect.

For example

- In delivering RSE (relationship and sex education) within a religiously conservative country, staff should understand what is acceptable as part of the curriculum. Respect for local culture and the need to remain within the country's laws is paramount.

Your school should build relations with key members of the community, including parents, faith leaders, government officials and pupils. This will help the school understand any cultural sensitivities.

Culture should never stand in the way of reporting abuse.

Further information

In many international schools, students gravitate towards other children of the same language, thereby leading to mini groups of friendships based on a common language. This can lead to a lack of understanding and rivalry as well as discrimination.

There may be a lack of a sense of belonging, one of the factors which leads to higher levels of poor wellbeing. Therefore, staff should cultivate a positive relationship with the students in their tutor group/advisory to empower the students to cultivate their sense of belonging within the wider school community.

What can you do?

As a person who has chosen to work with children, you have both legal and moral responsibilities towards them. There is a great deal that you can do to safeguard them and to promote their wellbeing.

Here are some underpinning principles to help you.

- Be aware that the welfare of the child is paramount.
- Respect all individuals regardless of their age, gender, ethnicity, developmental stage, sexual orientation, religion, belief, or whether the individual is disabled.
- Be responsible for your own actions and behaviour. Avoid any conduct which could lead to questions about your motives or intentions.
- Ensure that your safeguarding training is current and that you understand your school's policies and procedures. Be clear that you know what to do if you have concerns about a child or a colleague's behaviour.
- If someone makes an allegation about you, you must immediately report it in accordance with your school policy.
- In your work with children, be open, accessible, always prepared to listen, and supportive of children's needs.
- Consider the child as a whole, including their mental health.
- All school staff and volunteers are advised to maintain an attitude of 'it could happen here'.

One of the most important things is to be someone that a young person can turn to, and this means conveying that you are open and fully prepared to listen, as discussed in module two.

Awareness is often high when someone has just completed safeguarding training, but it is important that you maintain ongoing vigilance. You should be aware of young people's needs and behaviours, as well as being aware of your own behaviour and that of your colleagues. If someone makes an allegation about you, ensure you report it without delay.

Safe working practice

Do not

- engage in personal email, text, or telephone conversations with young people
- accept personal or 'friends' requests on social networking sites
- accept gifts unless they are small tokens of appreciation
- offer lifts to young people outside the agreements of your position
- show favouritism.

Do

- Report to your safeguarding person if a young person has become infatuated with you.
- Report to a senior member of staff if a young person or parent has become dependent on you.
- Follow your school's policy and procedures regarding physical intervention or contact.
- Be always open and honest when dealing with young people, so nothing can be misinterpreted.

Schools often have difficulty in accessing approved interpreters. However, in a situation where there is a language barrier, then the young person should be offered the opportunity of a member of staff who speaks their language to be involved in the discussion to ensure nothing is lost in translation.

In all conversations with a young person, at the end of the conversation, the member of staff should summarise the actions that have been agreed so that the young person fully understands what will happen.

Summary

This concludes your 'Child Protection Refresher for International Schools' course. You have learnt about what abuse is, the different types of abuse, and the signs abuse may be taking place. You know what to do if a child discloses harm to you or if you suspect abuse.

Ensuring you have the knowledge that will enable you to help safeguard others is imperative. You should be open, accessible, and prepared to listen and take action, and maintain an ongoing vigilance because abuse can and does happen, even in your school.

Use this list to check good working practice against your own.

In my work, I...

- ☐ have read and understood the school's safeguarding/child protection policies
- ☐ know who the school safeguarding lead and deputy is and how to contact them
- ☐ make sure my safeguarding training is up to date
- ☐ am open and prepared to listen to children and young people
- ☐ stay aware of the children and their needs and behaviours
- ☐ stay aware of my own behaviour and that of my colleagues
- ☐ will always act if I have any concerns about a child or young person
- ☐ am vigilant and know that abuse can happen anywhere

You are now ready to complete the corresponding questionnaire. Click **Questionnaire 3** to begin the questions.

When you have completed the questionnaire, there is the opportunity for you to leave feedback on the course and we would be very grateful if you would take a minute to do so.