

StudyNest Education

Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

POLICY STATEMENT

At StudyNest Education, we understand that protecting young people is our fundamental duty. We believe every student deserves to feel secure and supported during their educational journey with us. Our commitment extends beyond academic guidance to ensuring comprehensive welfare protection.

This policy establishes clear guidelines for our team, host families, and volunteers on maintaining student safety. It also demonstrates to families, educational consultants, and school partners our unwavering dedication to child protection.

Our approach follows current UK statutory guidance including Keeping Children Safe in Education and Working Together to Safeguard Children, supplemented by best practices from the NSPCC.

IMPORTANT NOTE FOR STUDYNEST EDUCATION STRUCTURE: As a startup organization, StudyNest Education operates with a single Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) who also serves as the Prevent Lead. In situations where the DSL is unavailable and there is an urgent safeguarding concern, staff and homestays are authorised and expected to contact the Local Safeguarding Partnership (LSP), Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), or emergency services directly. Contact details for these services are provided throughout this policy.

KEY SAFEGUARDING CONTACT DETAILS

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) & Prevent Lead & 24hr Emergency Contact:

- **Name:** Jessie Chang
- **Phone:** 07356268822
- **Email:** jessie@studynest.uk

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CORE PROTECTION PRINCIPLES

StudyNest Education operates under these fundamental safeguarding principles:

- Creating environments where students feel genuinely secure and valued
- Ensuring host families maintain consistently high safety standards
- Providing multiple accessible support channels, including round-the-clock bilingual assistance
- Placing ultimate responsibility for student welfare with company leadership
- Distributing safeguarding awareness amongst all team members and partners
- Establishing transparent reporting mechanisms for protection concerns
- Maintaining reliable communication channels with students
- Sharing necessary medical and educational information with host families appropriately
- Implementing immediate response protocols for missing or at-risk students
- Following legal frameworks for all child protection matters

StudyNest Education demonstrates its commitment through rigorous vetting processes and comprehensive DBS checks for all personnel working with young people. We maintain strong relationships with statutory child protection agencies.

Everyone associated with StudyNest Education shares responsibility for student welfare, regardless of their direct contact level with young people. This includes full-time staff, contractors, volunteers, host families, and service providers.

When safeguarding concerns arise, we prioritise the student's perspective and feelings in determining appropriate responses. Students receive clear information about support access through handbooks and emergency contact cards, with assurance that concerns will be handled seriously and sensitively.

We recognise that young people may struggle to discuss harmful experiences or may not recognise inappropriate treatment. Our staff maintain professional awareness and consult with the DSL regarding any concerns.

Building trustworthy relationships enables students to communicate openly about their experiences and concerns.

Protection encompasses preventing various forms of harm including sexual exploitation, peer abuse, extremism, female genital mutilation, physical and emotional abuse, domestic violence, online dangers, and bullying.

Our objective is maintaining caring environments where students feel respected and safe. StudyNest Education achieves this by:

1. Ensuring leadership possesses current safeguarding expertise and oversees implementation
2. Delivering targeted training for staff and host families
3. Fostering transparent communication prioritizing student wellbeing across all relationships
4. Addressing all protection reports through established internal procedures
5. Implementing comprehensive recruitment screening including enhanced DBS verification
6. Sustaining collaborative relationships with child welfare agencies

Any suspicion of child abuse or neglect must be reported immediately and confidentially to the DSL using the contact information provided in this policy.

RELATED POLICIES AND GUIDANCE

This policy works alongside these supporting documents:

- Bullying Prevention Policy (including cyberbullying)
- Counter-Extremism and Prevent Policy
- Digital Safety Policy
- Emergency Response Procedures (including pandemic protocols)
- Low-Level Concerns Management Policy
- Missing Student Response Policy
- Safe Recruitment Policy
- Professional Conduct Standards for Staff and Host Families
- Whistleblowing Policy

GOVERNMENT GUIDANCE

- Keeping Children Safe in Education (2024)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023)

KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE IN EDUCATION

Part One of *Keeping Children Safe in Education (2024)* contains essential protection guidance for anyone working with children. Though designed for schools, this guidance applies equally to guardianship services and host families. StudyNest Education requires all relevant staff, host families, and volunteers working with children to study this document. Access it at:

[Keeping children safe in education \(2024\) - GOV.UK](#)

Staff not working directly with children may read Annex A instead of the full Part One section.

DEFINITIONS

| Term | Meaning |
|---|---|
| Safeguarding and promoting child welfare | Protecting children from harm; preventing health and development impairment; ensuring safe, effective care; and enabling optimal outcomes |
| Child Protection | Specific safeguarding actions to protect children experiencing or at risk of significant harm |
| Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) | The person with lead responsibility for organisational safeguarding, trained to advanced standards |
| Prevent | UK government counter-terrorism strategy component focussed on preventing radicalisation |
| Local Safeguarding Partnership (LSP) | Multi-agency replacement for Local Safeguarding Children Boards, involving councils, police, and health services |
| LADO | Local Authority Designated Officer managing allegations against adults working with children |
| Children | All individuals under 18 years old |

UNDERSTANDING ABUSE AND NEGLECT

- Early recognition of abuse and neglect indicators enables prompt intervention. All staff and host families should understand warning signs and consult the DSL when uncertain.
- Abuse and neglect typically involve multiple overlapping factors rather than single categories.
- *Contextual Safeguarding*: Consider risks beyond family or school environments, including peer relationships, exploitation, criminal activity, or online dangers.
- Technology plays an increasing role in safeguarding concerns, with children facing both online and offline risks including harassment, non-consensual image sharing, or inappropriate content exposure.
- Children may also harm others online through group messaging or digital platforms.

Share all concerns with the DSL immediately, regardless of uncertainty levels.

FORMS OF ABUSE AND NEGLECT

(Based on Keeping Children Safe in Education, 2024)

Abuse constitutes child maltreatment through direct harm or failure to prevent harm. This includes non-physical harm such as emotional trauma from witnessing abuse. Abuse occurs in family, institutional, or community settings by known individuals or strangers. It may happen entirely online or use technology to facilitate offline harm. Adults or other children may perpetrate abuse.

Physical abuse includes hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, scalding, drowning, suffocating, or other physical harm. This encompasses inducing illness or fabricating medical symptoms.

Emotional abuse involves persistent maltreatment causing severe emotional development effects. Examples include making children feel worthless, unloved, or valued only for meeting others' needs. It may involve preventing self-expression, imposing inappropriate expectations, overprotection, limiting learning, or preventing social interaction. Witnessing others' abuse, serious bullying (including cyberbullying), and exploitation constitute emotional abuse. All maltreatment forms include emotional abuse elements.

Sexual abuse encompasses forcing or enticing children into sexual activities, regardless of their awareness. This includes contact acts (rape, oral sex, touching) and non-contact acts (exposing children to sexual content or encouraging inappropriate behaviour). Sexual abuse occurs online or offline and is not limited to adult males—

women and other children may also perpetrate abuse. Child-on-child sexual abuse is a recognised concern requiring specific organisational policies.

Neglect represents ongoing failure to meet children's basic physical and psychological needs, likely causing serious health or developmental impairment. This may occur during pregnancy (through maternal substance misuse) or after birth, including failure to:

- Provide adequate food, clothing, or shelter (including abandonment)
- Protect from physical and emotional harm or danger
- Ensure appropriate supervision (including unsuitable caregivers)
- Provide access to medical care or treatment
- Meet children's emotional needs

All staff and host families should understand abuse and neglect indicators and raise concerns promptly with the DSL when uncertain. Abuse rarely occurs in isolation—multiple issues often overlap, requiring comprehensive contextual responses.

(Additional specific abuse information appears at this policy's end.)

WARNING SIGNS AND INDICATORS

(Based on NSPCC guidance: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/what-is-child-abuse/types-of-abuse/>)

This section outlines common signs potentially indicating abuse or neglect. Comprehensive information on specific abuse forms—including sexual exploitation, trafficking, criminal exploitation, domestic abuse, FGM, grooming, historical abuse, and online abuse—is available on the NSPCC website.

General warning signs may include:

- Unexplained behavioural or personality changes
- Withdrawal or increased anxiety
- Sudden aggression or irritability
- Limited social skills or isolation
- Poor relationships with parents or caregivers
- Age-inappropriate adult knowledge
- Running away or going missing
- Consistently wearing concealing clothing

These signs don't always indicate abuse, but persistent or multiple concerns require reporting.

Concerning adult behaviour toward children should also be noted and reported where child welfare is at risk.

Physical Abuse Indicators

- Bruises, burns, scalds, bite marks
- Fractures or broken bones
- Poisoning symptoms (vomiting, drowsiness, seizures)
- Breathing difficulties from suffocation or drowning
- Infant head injuries (swelling, fractures, unusual behavior)

Emotional Abuse Indicators

- Low self-esteem or confidence
- Difficulty managing emotions or relationships
- Age-inappropriate behaviour or knowledge
- Extreme emotional reactions
- Social withdrawal or friendlessness

Sexual Abuse Indicators

Emotional and behavioural signs:

- Fear of specific individuals
- Sexualised language or behaviour
- Nightmares or bedwetting
- Substance misuse or self-harm
- Eating disorders

Physical signs:

- Genital injuries, pain, discharge, STIs, or pregnancy

Online sexual abuse indicators

- Increased internet secrecy
- Mood changes after online activity

- Unknown contacts or phone numbers

Children may give subtle abuse hints that should always be taken seriously.

Neglect Indicators

Poor hygiene and appearance:

- Dirty, smelly, or unwashed clothing
- Weather-inappropriate clothing
- Persistent hunger or no lunch money

Health and development concerns:

- Anemia, poor muscle tone, dental problems
- Missed medical appointments or vaccinations
- Frequent illness or infections
- Untreated injuries or unexplained accidents

Behavioural or emotional changes:

- Aggression, clinginess, anxiety, or depression
- Concentration difficulties
- School absence or disengagement
- Self-harm or substance misuse signs

Family or living conditions:

- Poor housing or unsafe living environments
- Unsupervised care or sibling responsibility

Consider all signs contextually. When uncertain, consult the DSL immediately.

RESPONSE PROCEDURES

New staff, volunteers, and host families learn about safeguarding arrangements, DSL identity, and concern-sharing methods during orientation. While the DSL is the usual reporting channel, anyone may refer directly to the LSP or LADO using contacts provided in this document.

StudyNest Education will promptly self-report significant safeguarding concerns, potentially compromising incidents, or below-standard behaviour to AEGIS through formal communication channels for transparency and regulatory compliance.

When the DSL is unavailable: If the DSL cannot be contacted immediately and there is an urgent safeguarding concern, staff and hoststays should contact the Local Safeguarding Partnership (LSP) or emergency services directly. Contact details are provided in this policy.

Response Actions for Child Concerns

- All staff and host families must identify and respond to suspected or actual abuse and disclosures. Anyone receiving abuse disclosures, allegations, or suspicions must report immediately to the DSL.
- Immediate harm risks require immediate telephone referrals to the LSP or Police.
- Less urgent concerns or Early Help requests will be sent by the DSL to the LSP.
- The DSL may seek advice from Social Care or other appropriate agencies regarding uncertain responses.
- School-related safeguarding concerns will be referred to the relevant school DSL. Staff allegations follow school policies, typically involving the Head Teacher or Chair of Governors if the Head is involved.
- Sub-threshold concerns will be filed and monitored by the DSL, with LSP referrals made if situations escalate.
- Safeguarding concerns or Children's Social Care referral intentions will be shared with parents or carers when possible, except when this might increase harm risks or impede criminal investigations. LSP and Police consultation may be necessary regarding information sharing timing.
- Staff or host families with continuing concerns about unaddressed or unimproved situations should request DSL case reconsideration.
- If the DSL is unavailable or concerns aren't taken seriously, this shouldn't delay appropriate action. Anyone may refer to the LSP or Police where child harm is suspected or actual. Contact details appear at this policy's beginning.
- The DSL maintains and securely stores complete records of reports and actions in dedicated safeguarding files.

Peer-to-Peer Abuse

All staff and host families should recognize that children can abuse other children (peer-to-peer abuse) inside and outside educational settings and online, potentially occurring in host family care. Understanding indicators and response methods is essential.

Even without reports, abuse may still occur unreported. Staff or host families with peer abuse concerns should consult the designated safeguarding lead.

StudyNest Education maintains zero tolerance for abuse. All staff and host families must understand the importance of challenging inappropriate peer behaviours that are actually abusive. Dismissing behaviours like sexual harassment as "just banter," "having a laugh," "growing up," or "boys being boys" creates unacceptable behaviour cultures, unsafe child environments, and worst-case scenarios normalising abuse and discouraging reporting.

While girls are more likely to be victims and boys perpetrators, all peer abuse is unacceptable and taken seriously.

Peer abuse likely includes but isn't limited to:

- Bullying (including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying)
- Intimate personal relationship abuse between children (teenage relationship abuse)
- Physical abuse including hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or other physical harm (may include online elements facilitating, threatening, or encouraging physical abuse)
- Sexual violence including rape, assault by penetration, and sexual assault (may include online elements)
- Sexual harassment including sexual comments, remarks, jokes, and online harassment, standalone or part of broader abuse patterns
- Causing non-consensual sexual activity engagement
- Consensual and non-consensual nude and semi-nude sharing (sexting or youth-produced sexual imagery)
- Upskirting
- Initiation/hazing violence and rituals (including online elements)

Peer Abuse Prevention Measures:

- Regular staff and host family training
- Student education through handbooks and discussions
- Clear Student Handbook concern-raising guidelines
- Effective communication channels enabling comfortable homestay carer or guardian approaches

- Effective communication between the DSL and school DSLs

Peer abuse reports should prompt immediate DSL consultation.

Student Concern Raising Methods

- Students must understand that concerns will be treated seriously.
- Students are encouraged to approach trusted adults including school staff, parents, host carers, guardians, or the guardianship organization DSL. This is explained verbally with Student Handbook written reminders.

Response and Allegation Management

- All peer abuse reports receive case-by-case handling with the DSL taking leadership roles, using professional judgment supported by agencies like social care or police as required.
- Staff and host families must follow outlined policy procedures.
- Reports with online elements follow searching, screening, and confiscation advice. Staff or host families must not view or forward images unless unavoidable and only with another staff member (preferably DSL) present. (See DfE guidance Section 2.10 for appropriate procedures.)
- The DSL will notify the student's school DSL promptly.

Risk Assessment

Sexual violence reports require immediate DSL risk and needs assessments. Sexual harassment reports require case-by-case risk assessment consideration. Assessments should consider:

- Victim protection and support
- Alleged perpetrator
- All other children (and appropriate homestay family members) at the homestay

Risk assessments will be recorded [written or electronic—specify filing location] and reviewed regularly. The DSL will ensure LSP engagement.

Student Support for Peer Abuse Involvement

StudyNest Education supports students involved in peer abuse through:

- Regular student contact for welfare monitoring
- Providing staff and host families with relevant information (need-to-know basis)
- School liaison for coordinated support

- Helpline and specialist support organization details

Report Management

The DSL determines peer abuse case management according to LSP thresholds. Depending on severity, reports may be managed through:

- Internal management (including appropriate school DSL liaison)
- Early help
- LSP referral where children are at risk or harmed
- Police referral for serious sexual offenses

StudyNest Education expects all staff and host families to understand and follow policy procedures. Early inappropriate behavior intervention prevents future abuse incidents.

Staff and Host Family Allegations

Harm Threshold Allegations

This applies if anyone working, volunteering, or hosting students for StudyNest Education allegedly:

- Behaved harmfully toward children or may have harmed children
- May have committed child-related criminal offenses
- Behaved toward children indicating potential harm risks
- Behaved indicating unsuitability for child work (transferable risk)

In such cases:

- StudyNest Education follows statutory guidance in Part 4 of the latest *Keeping Children Safe in Education*.
- Allegations must be reported to the company director acting as designated case manager. The director contacts the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) immediately and follows their instructions. No internal investigation occurs at this stage.
- If allegations concern the company director, contact the LADO directly.
- Individuals removed from regulated activity due to child harm or risk require Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) referrals.
- Historical allegations receive direct police referrals.

Sub-Threshold Allegations (Low-Level Concerns)

StudyNest Education's Low-Level Concerns Policy manages concerns not meeting harm thresholds. The Staff Conduct Code provides professional boundary guidance for all staff, volunteers, and host families.

Low-level concerns refer to behaviour that:

- Conflicts with the Staff Conduct Code, including outside-work conduct
- Isn't serious enough for LADO referral

Low-level concern examples may include:

- Over-familiarity or excessive friendliness with children
- Showing favouritism
- Using personal mobile phones for student photography
- Spending time alone with students in secluded areas
- Using inappropriate, sexualised, intimidating, or offensive language

Such behaviour may be unintentional, thoughtless, or misunderstood—or represent deeper issue early warnings. All low-level concerns require DSL or director reporting. Our Low-Level Concerns Policy details recording, reviewing, and action procedures.

Learning from Allegations and Concerns

Following substantiated allegations, case managers and LADOs review cases for procedure and policy improvements including:

- Suspension decisions and justifications
- Suspension management and reinstatement support needs
- Different future case management possibilities

Even unfounded, false, malicious, or unsubstantiated allegations warrant case manager and LADO reviews for lessons learned.

Receiving Child Disclosures

Student abuse disclosures require:

- Always taking disclosures seriously and ensuring child safety
- Reassuring children and confirming they're heard
- Not promising confidentiality—information sharing is required for protection
- Recording disclosures in detail promptly

- Asking only open questions ("tell me," "describe," "explain") avoiding leading or investigative language
- Avoiding "why," "how," or "what happened" questions—leave these for trained professionals
- Calling 999 for immediate child danger
- Notifying the DSL within 24 hours
- Contacting the designated emergency safeguarding number (same as DSL contact) outside hours

Safeguarding Information Sharing

Safeguarding information sharing occurs on strict need-to-know bases with:

- StudyNest Education team members and host families
- School DSLs
- Social care services, safeguarding partners, and appropriate agencies

Staff and host families must maintain confidentiality per organizational Data Protection Policy. UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018 don't prevent necessary child protection information sharing.

Staff and host families must never promise safeguarding concern secrecy.

The DSL determines safeguarding information access and shares only with those having legitimate needs.

StudyNest Education seeks parent/carer consent before social care referrals when possible—unless this increases child risks or jeopardizes police investigations.

DSL RESPONSIBILITIES

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) holds primary responsibility for safeguarding and child protection, including online safety, within StudyNest Education. This responsibility appears clearly in their job description, and the DSL receives necessary authority and organisational standing for effective duty fulfilment.

The DSL is expected to:

- Refer suspected abuse cases to local authority children's social care as required
- Support staff and host families in children's social care referrals
- Refer radicalization concerns to the Channel programme (this responsibility may belong to the Prevent Lead if different from the DSL)

- Support staff and host families with Channel programme referrals when needed
- Refer cases to police where crimes may have been committed
- Act as key contact with three safeguarding partners
- Liaise with StudyNest Education owner or managing director for safeguarding issue updates
- Coordinate with staff and host families on safety, safeguarding, and digital wellbeing matters, working with external agencies appropriately
- Serve as expert advice and guidance source for all staff and host families
- Promote effective information sharing internally and with schools, safeguarding partners, agencies, and relevant professionals
- Foster student-listening cultures ensuring voices, concerns, and feelings are acknowledged and considered
- Recognise student barriers when approaching adults and take active trust-building and open communication steps
- Ensure safeguarding policy understanding, implementation, and accessibility for all relevant parties
- Review and update child protection policies annually and oversee regular safeguarding procedure reviews with senior leadership
- Ensure child protection policy availability to stakeholders on the StudyNest Education website
- Engage with safeguarding partners for staff and host family training opportunity and local safeguarding procedure update information

DSL Contact Details

Jessie Chang

- **Phone:**
- **Email:** jessie@studynest.uk
- **Roles:** Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), Prevent Lead, 24hr Emergency Contact

Counter-Radicalisation (Prevent)

StudyNest Education maintains a dedicated Counter-Radicalisation and Prevent Policy outlining radicalization concern identification and response procedures. Copies are available upon request.

Prevent Lead: Jessie Chang (same contact details as DSL above)

DOCUMENTATION STANDARDS

StudyNest Education commits to maintaining clear, thorough, and accurate safeguarding and child protection records. These records ensure timely, coherent, and effective concern responses and provide auditable action trails regarding child welfare.

All concerns, disclosures, decisions, and actions require written documentation, regardless of eventual referral decisions. Records are kept confidentially and securely, separate from students' academic files. Hard copies are stored in locked filing cabinets, while digital records remain in secure, encrypted, access-controlled systems. Only the DSL has authorized access to these safeguarding records.

Note: As a single-person operation, the DSL must ensure that safeguarding records are securely stored and that emergency access procedures are in place should they become unavailable.

Each safeguarding file must contain:

- Complete chronological accounts of all concerns raised, including dates, times, and involved individuals
- Clear comprehensive concern or disclosure summaries written in factual, objective language
- All discussion records, including those with students, parents/carers, or other professionals, noting attendees and key discussion points
- Rationale for all decisions made, including external agency referral decisions
- Action logs showing what was taken, by whom, and when
- Correspondence and documents exchanged with external agencies, including local safeguarding partners (LSP), police, or social care
- Referral form copies, meeting minutes, and agreed plans or interventions
- Follow-up actions and outcomes, plus applicable closure information

Records will be dated, signed (or digitally verified), and updated promptly. Separate safeguarding files are created for each student where concerns exist, with markers placed on students' main files indicating safeguarding file existence. Files are retained per data retention and child protection regulations.

Information sharing occurs only on strictly need-to-know bases for student welfare protection, aligned with data protection legislation and StudyNest Education confidentiality and safeguarding policies. Staff, host families, or volunteers uncertain

about recording procedures must consult the DSL for guidance. If the DSL is unavailable in urgent situations, they should contact the Local Safeguarding Partnership for advice.

TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

StudyNest Education ensures all staff, volunteers, and host families receive appropriate role-based safeguarding training. All undertaken safeguarding training records are maintained.

DSL Training

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) must complete advanced safeguarding training delivered in person by recognized providers such as Local Safeguarding Partners (LSP), AEGIS, or the NSPCC. This training requires renewal every two years minimum. Additional topical safeguarding updates are attended appropriately throughout the year.

Note: As StudyNest Education operates with a single DSL, it is essential that the DSL maintains up-to-date training and has clear procedures for emergency contacts when unavailable.

Staff Safeguarding Training

All other staff members, including administrative staff and volunteers, require Level 2 safeguarding training completion every two years. This training may be delivered online or face-to-face and must cover core child protection principles, abuse sign recognition, reporting procedures, and disclosure responses.

Host Family Training

All host families must complete annual safeguarding training based on the British Council's "Safeguarding for Homestay Hosts" course or equivalent approved courses. The DSL ensures hosts understand their role-specific responsibilities, concern-raising methods, and StudyNest Education's safeguarding expectations.

Additionally, StudyNest Education encourages all staff and host families to self-report situations where their actions might be misinterpreted or fall short of professional standards. Confidential systems exist for logging and escalating these incidents for review, addressed promptly to maintain safeguarding standards.

RAISING CONCERNS POLICY

StudyNest Education maintains a dedicated Whistleblowing Policy outlining poor practice, misconduct, or potential legal breach concern-raising procedures by colleagues, managers, or others within the organisation. This policy protects individuals

reporting good-faith concerns and ensures reports receive serious consideration, appropriate investigation, and no whistleblower retaliation.

LOCAL AUTHORITY PARTNERSHIPS

StudyNest Education works closely with Local Safeguarding Partnerships (LSPs) and follows *Working Together to Safeguard Children* statutory guidance. All partner schools maintain their own safeguarding policies including designated LSP contacts available on respective websites.

If safeguarding concerns arise while students are placed in host families outside their school's local authority area, StudyNest Education identifies and liaises with relevant regional LSPs, following appropriate LSP guidance and referral procedures.

This link provides a central UK LSP list: <https://www.safecic.co.uk/your-scb-acpc/55-free-downloads-and-safeguarding-links/61-safeguarding-children-board-links>

Local authority contact details for StudyNest Education operating areas appear in appendices or safeguarding contact tables. Where contact details are unclear or unavailable, staff escalate concerns by calling local police (101 for non-emergency or 999 in urgent cases) across England, Wales, and Scotland.

In Scotland, non-emergency referrals can also go to local children's social work teams via local authority websites or the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration: <https://www.scra.gov.uk/contact-us/>

In Wales, contact local child protection services through appropriate local authority websites. These summaries will appear in the policy reference section.

Regional LSP and LADO Contacts

Host families must know how to contact their local safeguarding partners (LSP). Since hosts live in different areas, use the UK government's official website <https://www.gov.uk/report-child-abuse-to-local-council> to find appropriate local authority safeguarding contact details for your location. If uncertain or needing assistance, contact our organization directly for guidance.

FAMILY AND SCHOOL COMMUNICATION

- StudyNest Education may share confidential safeguarding information with Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSL) at schools or colleges students attend. When students transfer to new institutions, relevant safeguarding records may be shared with new school or college DSLs supporting care and protection continuity.
- While StudyNest Education maintains transparency and open family communication, the organization reserves rights to contact Local Safeguarding

Partnerships (LSP) or police without informing parents when judged in children's best interests.

- Safeguarding information normally isn't shared with agents unless necessary for student protection. In such cases, information disclosure occurs on strict need-to-know bases with clear confidentiality understanding.

SPECIFIC SAFEGUARDING TOPICS

This guidance adapts *Keeping Children Safe in Education* and has been edited appropriately for guardianship contexts. For additional detail including other abuse types, refer to the latest *Keeping Children Safe in Education* Annex B.

Key Safeguarding Issues

Staff and host families should recognize behaviors potentially indicating student harm risks. These may include substance misuse, missing education, serious violence involvement (including county lines activity), radicalization, and consensual or non-consensual nude or semi-nude image/video sharing. Key awareness issues include:

Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)

CCE involves individuals or gangs exploiting power imbalances to coerce, manipulate, or deceive children into criminal activity in exchange for goods, protection, status, or through threats or violence. CCE affects boys and girls and often includes drug or money movement (commonly "county lines") but may involve other illegal activities like theft, assault, or weapon carrying.

Victims may be coerced through threats or become indebted, creating entrapment cycles. They may appear willing, making exploitation less obvious. Girls may experience different coercion forms, and vulnerability to both criminal and sexual exploitation shouldn't be underestimated.

Further CCE guidance appears in *Keeping Children Safe in Education* Annex B.

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

CSE constitutes sexual abuse where children are coerced into sexual activities for attention, protection, money, or other benefits. This may involve physical sexual contact but also includes non-contact forms like grooming, sexual image production or distribution, and online abuse.

CSE may occur over time or as single events. Some children may be unaware of exploitation, believing they're in consensual relationships. CSE affects all genders and can include older children who may legally consent to sex but are nevertheless abused or manipulated.

Additional CSE definitions, signs, and responses appear in *Keeping Children Safe in Education* Annex B.

Serious Violence

Serious violent crime involvement or risk indicators include unexplained absences, peer group changes, new possessions, injuries, or coercion signs. Risk factors include frequent absences, exclusion, prior victimization, or early criminal behavior. StudyNest Education staff and host families should consult *Preventing Youth Violence and Gang Involvement* and *County Lines Guidance* for further advice.

Students Missing Education

Repeated or prolonged absence can indicate multiple safeguarding risks including abuse, exploitation, or mental health crises. Staff must report such concerns to students' schools, which follow missing education protocols.

County Lines

County lines refers to drug trafficking operations using children for drug transport and storage, often involving coercion and violence. Indicators include unfamiliar area travel, unexplained wealth, or burner phone possession. Children may also be found in "trap houses" or asked to conceal drugs internally. Further guidance is available through the Home Office.

Modern Slavery and National Referral Mechanism

Modern slavery involves human trafficking and forced exploitation including sexual exploitation, forced labor, criminality, and organ removal. Staff should consult *Modern Slavery Statutory Guidance* and refer concerns via the National Referral Mechanism (NRM).

Cybercrime

Cybercrime involves criminal activity using computers or networks including illegal hacking, denial-of-service attacks, or malware creation. Some young people may unknowingly become involved. The DSL may refer to the *Cyber Choices* programme where appropriate. More resources are available at the National Cyber Security Centre and NPCC.

MENTAL HEALTH CONSIDERATIONS

All StudyNest Education staff and host families must recognize that mental health difficulties may sometimes signal that students have suffered or risk suffering abuse, neglect, or exploitation.

While only trained professionals should make formal mental health diagnoses, staff and host families are well-positioned to observe students in daily life and identify concerning behaviour. Recognising distress patterns, withdrawal, or significant emotional changes is critical for early intervention.

Adverse childhood experiences including abuse, neglect, or trauma can significantly affect children's mental health throughout development. All staff and host families must understand how these experiences may influence student behaviour, emotional wellbeing, and academic progress.

StudyNest Education encourages staff and host families to access guidance and professional support when identifying and responding to students with potential mental health concerns. Resources include:

- AEGIS Quality Standards providing Mental Health Support Lists (Appendix 10)
- Department for Education guidance on *Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools*
- Public Health England's "Every Mind Matters" campaign including lesson plans and wellbeing resources useful for guardianship organizations

If mental health concerns also raise safeguarding issues, staff and host families must take immediate action including following Safeguarding and Child Protection Policies and informing the DSL without delay.

StudyNest Education may be asked by schools to remove students due to mental health concerns. In such instances, StudyNest Education liaises closely with schools to determine most appropriate student support plans.

Before removing students from school settings for mental health reasons, student schools complete *Student Removal Forms* (see Appendix 2). This ensures the organization clearly understands request backgrounds and rationales, enabling StudyNest Education to provide appropriate care and follow-up student support.

StudyNest Education pays due consideration and undertakes full risk assessments prior to accepting guardianship of students with mental health issues to ensure student needs can be met. Where students require mental health medication while with host families, StudyNest Education provides host families with written medication form instructions. Host families should record medication dates and times on provided forms, returning forms to the guardianship office after students' stays.

INTER-STUDENT SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT

Sexual violence and harassment can occur between children of any age or gender, both in person and online. This may involve groups of children targeting individuals or other groups. These incidents can be profoundly distressing and may affect students'

emotional wellbeing, school experiences, and academic progress, particularly when alleged perpetrators are part of the same school environment.

Such behaviour is never acceptable. Staff and host families must ensure students reporting these experiences are taken seriously, supported appropriately, and never made to feel ashamed or at fault. Sexual violence and harassment exist on continuums and may overlap. Staff and host families must remain vigilant in identifying and responding to all incidents.

Certain student groups may be more vulnerable including girls, children with SEND, and LGBTQ+ children.

Staff and host families must:

- Challenge inappropriate sexual behaviours and language
- Make clear that such behaviours aren't tolerated
- Never dismiss behaviour as "banter" or "part of growing up"
- Intervene in physical acts like touching or lifting clothing that may be sexually motivated

Understanding Sexual Violence

Sexual violence refers to Sexual Offences Act 2003 offenses including:

- Rape – Non-consensual penetration with a penis
- Assault by Penetration – Non-consensual penetration with objects or body parts
- Sexual Assault – Non-consensual sexual touching
- Causing non-consensual sexual activity engagement – Including coercing children into sexual acts with others or alone

Consent means having freedom and capacity to choose. Children under 13 cannot legally consent to sexual activity. The age of consent is 16.

Understanding Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is unwanted sexual conduct violating dignity or creating hostile, degrading, or sexualized environments. This occurs online or offline and may involve:

- Sexual comments, jokes, or name-calling
- Inappropriate touching or sexual image display
- Online behaviour like explicit content sending, sexting, or upskirting (a criminal offence)

Response to Reports

Disclosure responses must be immediate, supportive, and non-judgmental. Staff and host families must follow reporting processes outlined in *Keeping Children Safe in Education* (KCSIE) Part One and consult the DSL without delay.

CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS ABUSE CONCERNS

So-called "honor"-based abuse (HBA) includes crimes and incidents committed to protect or defend perceived family or community honor. This includes female genital mutilation (FGM), forced marriage, breast ironing, and other harmful practices. These acts often involve collective family or community pressure and can include multiple perpetrators.

All HBA forms are considered abuse and must be treated accordingly. Staff and host families must recognize complexity and risks involved and respond per safeguarding protocols. If there's any concern that children may be at risk or have been HBA victims, staff or host families must immediately report this to the DSL. The safeguarding lead will follow national and local procedures and liaise with police and children's social care appropriately.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

FGM refers to procedures involving partial or total external female genitalia removal or other female genital organ injury for non-medical reasons. It's illegal in the UK and a severe abuse form.

All staff and host families must report FGM concerns to the DSL. Teachers have specific legal duties to report to police if they discover FGM acts appear to have been carried out on girls under 18.

Forced Marriage

Forced marriage occurs when one or both individuals don't freely consent and pressure, threats, or coercion are involved. It's a criminal offence in England and Wales.

Guardianship staff may become aware of warning signs and must act swiftly. The Forced Marriage Unit offers support and can be contacted at 020 7008 0151 or via fmufcdo.gov.uk.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IMPACT

Under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, children witnessing or experiencing domestic abuse effects are recognized as victims in their own right. Abuse can take physical, emotional, sexual, economic, or coercive and controlling behavior forms between current or former partners or family members.

Children may experience or witness domestic abuse at home or in host families. This may include teenage relationship abuse or parent-directed abuse. StudyNest Education recognises domestic abuse's wide-reaching and lasting impact on children's emotional wellbeing and development. Safeguarding procedures must be followed in all such cases.

DIGITAL SAFETY

Protecting students from online risks is a core priority. Risks are classified into four areas:

1. **Content** – Harmful or inappropriate content exposure (pornography, fake news, racism, self-harm, suicide, extremist views)
2. **Contact** – Harmful online interactions (grooming, exploitation, peer pressure, impersonation)
3. **Conduct** – Risky or harmful online behavior (sexting, cyberbullying, explicit content sharing)
4. **Commerce** – Financial risks (phishing, gambling, online scams)

If there's concern that students or staff have been affected by online commercial scams or phishing attempts, StudyNest Education reports this to the Anti-Phishing Working Group (<https://apwg.org/>).

Further detail appears in StudyNest Education's Digital Safety and Bullying Policies. Regular online safety training is provided to all staff, host families, and volunteers for awareness and prevention promotion.

REVIEW

We commit to reviewing our policy and good practice annually.

This policy was last reviewed on: [TO BE UPDATED]

Signed: [TO BE UPDATED]

APPENDIX 1: CONCERN REPORT FORM

CHILD PROTECTION RECORD – Concern Report

| | | | |
|----------------------------|--|------------------------------------|--|
| Date of record: | | Date of incident: | |
| Name of referrer: | | Role of referrer: | |
| Student name: | | | |
| Details of concern: | use initials for other children / young people involved, unless there is a specific need to name them in full contemporaneous notes, if taken, may be attached to this form. | | |
| Reported to: | | Role of person reported to: | |
| Signed: | | | |

For DSL use

| |
|--|
| Action taken: |
| Advice sought: <i>from whom and what was advice given</i> |
| Concern / referral discussed with parent? <i>If not, state reasons why – if yes, note discussion with parent/carers</i> |
| Referral made? <i>If not, state reasons why – if yes, record to whom and any action agreed</i> |
| Feedback to referring member of staff or homestay: |
| By whom |
| Response to / action taken with student: |
| By whom |
| Name and contact of key workers: |
| Name and contact details of GP: |
| Other notes / information / concerns: Any other action required: |

APPENDIX 2: SCHOOL REMOVAL REQUEST FORM

To support our student optimally, please complete the following student removal form. Note that StudyNest Education representatives cannot collect students until this form is completed and returned to us by email: jessie@studynest.uk

| | |
|---|---|
| School Name | |
| Student Name | |
| Date of Birth | |
| Reason for removal request | |
| Has the student been assessed by a medical professional? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, date of assessment: <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Please provide assessment summary if applicable. | |
| Is the student at risk of self-harm? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Is the student a risk to others? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Has the school followed its mental health and child protection policies and procedures? Please provide copies of any relevant policies and procedures. | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Any other additional information we should be aware of | |
| Name | |
| Position | |
| Date | |