

Responding to school-based harm: pathways and thresholds

This document is an example of a safeguarding policy for responding to harm when it takes place within a school or education setting. There are two elements:

- 1) A thresholds of harm table
- 2) A referral pathway for schools

The **thresholds of harm table** provides descriptions of 'indicators of harm' i.e. things that indicate that harm could be happening. Firstly, it presents indicators of harm as they might affect and be seen in an individual child or young person ('Child/Young Person indicators'). Secondly it presents indicators of harm as they might affect and be seen across multiple young people linked to a school ('Context Indicators'). The Context Indicators include an additional element which sets out indicators of harm as they might be seen and affect the policy and processes within the school context.

The **referral pathway for schools** sets out possible referral routes and possible responses that could be undertaken to make a school context safer.

This example policy draws on work undertaken by Kent Children's Services to support school staff when they are considering making a referral to children's social care. The policy is designed to help them decide whether to make a referral, whether an assessment of the school context itself (rather than individual children who go there) is appropriate and what the pathway might be at different levels following a referral. Once a referral has been made, the policy was also intended to support the local multi-agency safeguarding Extra-Familial Harm panel. Using the policy, members of the Extra-Familial Harm panel would review the referral, make threshold decisions, and allocate the work. A number of options were available, and is outlined in the flowchart.

- Does not meet threshold: school to manage internally
- Early help/ Universal: School could host a 'Safety Summit' or 'School Partnership Meeting'
- Child in Need/ Child protection: School to undertake a 'Beyond Referrals' self-assessment (toolkit available on the Contextual Safeguarding Network), or Children's Social care to undertake a school assessment

For more information, visit the Schools section of the Scale Up Toolkit.

Thresholds of harm table

Universal response Level 1	Additional response Level 2	Intensive response Level 3	Specialist response Level 4
Child / Young Person Indicators	Child / Young Person Indicators	Child / Young Person Indicators	Child / Young Person Indicators
<p>I am safe at home and outside in my community</p> <p>I have protective, consensual and pro-social peer groups in this context?</p> <p>I know who to talk to in this context if I am unsafe and I believe the response is likely to make things better.</p>	<p>I occasionally truant or have absences from school</p> <p>I have had some fixed term exclusions</p> <p>I have started to go missing, or been absent from school or home</p> <p>I am being encouraged to use substances at school or via school-based networks</p> <p>I am being encouraged to truant from school</p> <p>I am showing early signs of associating with peers in school or via school-based networks involved in or being encouraged to commit low level crimes or become involved in anti-social behaviour</p> <p>I may be at risk due to content, conduct or contact online</p> <p>I am showing early signs of instigating or experiencing problematic sexual behaviour and language in school</p>	<p>I have persistent unauthorised absence from school/NEET</p> <p>I am at risk of, or I have been permanently excluded from school</p> <p>I regularly go missing from home or school with no explanation</p> <p>I am vulnerable to/exhibiting intimate partner abuse/violence</p> <p>I am being encouraged to become involved in a gang/groomed into criminal exploitation at school or via school-based networks</p> <p>I am being encouraged to carry drugs/weapons at school or via school-based networks</p> <p>I am at risk due to having contact with people who pose a risk of physical or sexual harm to children at school or via school-based networks</p> <p>I am in a peer group that regularly goes missing which is associated with a school-based network</p> <p>I am at risk due to improper content, contact or conduct online which is associated with a school-based network</p> <p>I am vulnerable to criminal/sexual exploitation or radicalisation</p>	<p>I am being trafficked</p> <p>I am experiencing peer on peer abuse at school or via school-based networks which may involve use of/or being forced to carry weapons in a group setting, i.e. gangs/county lines</p> <p>I am at high risk of harm due to illegal or inappropriate content, conduct or contact online</p> <p>I am high risk of harm of being radicalised, abused or exploited through technology or inappropriate relationships, in person, or online</p> <p>I am being criminally/sexually exploited in a group setting, i.e. Gangs at school or via school-based networks</p> <p>I am instigating or experiencing intimate partner abuse or violence</p> <p>I am at high risk of significant harm when I go missing from home or school</p>



Universal response Level 1	Additional response Level 2	Intensive response Level 3	Specialist response Level 4
Context Indicators	Context Indicators	Context Indicators	Context Indicators
<p>No significant number or pattern of children / young people experiencing child/individual indicators at school/ linked to school networks and school's response is a safeguarding one</p> <p>Context of harmful incidents are assessed and intervened in, following incidents of harm taking place there.</p> <p>School responds to harmful incidents with contextual joined up multi agency approach to safeguarding i.e Groupwork or change in internal procedures</p> <p>The dominant culture amongst students and staff is focussed on welfare. All forms of discrimination are challenged and there is a healthy attitude towards relationships, equality and difference.</p> <p>Staff feel confident and competent in all aspects of defining, identifying and responding to EFH within a child welfare approach.</p>	<p>Emerging pattern of children / young people experiencing child/individual indicators at school/ linked to school networks and school's response is behavioural/criminal issue rather than a matter for safeguarding</p> <p>Sometimes aspects of a context of harmful incidents are changed following incidents but it is inconsistent.</p> <p>Responses to harmful incidents in school are coordinated in a multi-agency approach to safeguarding i.e. Groupwork or change in internal procedures</p> <p>There is some evidence of unhealthy attitudes towards relationships, equality and difference that are inconsistently challenged.</p> <p>Some Staff do not feel confident in all aspects of defining, identifying and responding to EFH within a child welfare approach.</p>	<p>Significant numbers of children /young people experiencing child/individual indicators at school/ linked to school networks and school's response is behavioural/criminal issue rather than a matter for safeguarding</p> <p>Context of harmful incidents are discussed but change is slow or ineffective.</p> <p>Responses to harmful incidents in school are individualised or isolated in manner without multi agency input and does not prompt a change or welfare intervention with children / young people</p> <p>There is some evidence of harmful, discriminatory and unhealthy attitudes towards relationships, equality and difference.</p> <p>Some staff do not feel competent in some aspects of defining, identifying and responding to EFH within a child welfare approach.</p>	<p>High numbers of children / young people experiencing child/individual indicators at school/ linked to school networks and school's response is behavioural/criminal issue rather than a matter for safeguarding</p> <p>Context of harmful incidents are not assessed or intervened in following incidents</p> <p>Lack of response to harmful incidents in school</p> <p>The dominant culture features evidence of harmful, discriminatory and unhealthy attitudes towards relationships, equality and difference.</p> <p>Staff do not feel confident and competent in all aspects of defining, identifying and responding to EFH within a child welfare approach.</p>
Policy and processes indicators	Policy and process indicators	Policy and process indicators	Policy and process indicators
Safeguarding policies are understood by all staff, there is a joined-up responsibility to adhere and implement them	Safeguarding policies are not understood by all staff and adhered to by those responsible for their implementation	Safeguarding policies are not understood by all staff and adhered to inconsistently by those responsible for their implementation	Safeguarding policies are not understood by all staff and not adhered to by those responsible for their implementation

Referral pathway for schools

Scale-Up sites developed different systems for responding to harm in schools. The flowchart below is inspired by the learnings from these sites, including Kent's school assessment pilot; and outlines the different processes developed for screening and assessing harm in schools and how this fits within a wider safeguarding system. See the 'Contextual Approaches to Schools Briefing' for more information.

