

1. Protecting 16-and 17-year-olds from sexual abuse

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Across the UK it's illegal for people in a position of trust, such as teachers or care workers, to engage in sexual activity with a child in their care – even if the young person is over the age of consent. Legislation about abuse of position of trust is included in the Sexual Offences Act 2003 in England and Wales; the Sexual Offences (Northern Ireland) Order 2008 and the Sexual Offences (Scotland) Act 2009. The law aims to protect children from sexual abuse and specifies which roles are classed as positions of trust.

However, there is a loophole in this legislation. Roles such as sports coaches, driving instructors and youth workers are not classed as being positions of trust – even though they have regular and direct contact with children and are in a position of authority.

This means adults in these roles can abuse their power and engage in sexual activity with 16-and 17-year-olds in their care – without committing a crime.

We're calling on government to #CloseTheLoophole in the law and make it illegal for all adults to engage in sexual activity with a 16-and 17-year-old in their care. This means making all roles where an adult works or volunteers with a young person under 18 a position of trust.

Link: <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/news/2018/november/protecting-16-and-17-year-olds-from->

2. Elective home education

The Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS) has published analysis of a survey about children and young people who are home schooled across England. The survey received responses from 106 local authorities out of 152 contacted. Key findings include: it is estimated that 57,873 children and young people are home schooled across all 152 local authorities in England; local authorities reported that an average of 11 per cent of their home schooling cohort were known to children's social care, both historic and/or current.

Link: http://adcs.org.uk/assets/documentation/ADCS_EHE_survey_analysis_2018_FINAL_web.pdf

3. Criminal exploitation

Ofsted has published findings from three joint targeted area inspections which investigated the multi-agency response to child exploitation and children missing from home, care or education in spring 2018. Key findings include: all children are vulnerable to exploitation, regardless of perceived vulnerabilities; agencies should learn from past child sexual exploitation cases; children's needs and safety must be prioritised.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/756031/Protecting_children_from_criminal_exploitation_human_trafficking_modern_slavery_adendum_141118.pdf

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4. Protecting children from bullying and cyberbullying

It's important for organisations that work with children to create a culture where children feel they can tell someone if they have a problem and where it is clearly communicated that bullying will not be tolerated.

This might include:

- talking to young people about healthy relationships to help create positive social norms and challenge unhealthy behaviours
- promoting sources of help and information such as Childline so children know where to go to get help if they don't feel able to talk to any of the adults working with them.

Schools

Schools in particular have an important role to play in teaching children that bullying is unacceptable and giving them the skills to build positive relationships (Bainbridge, Ross and Woodhouse, 2017).

Anti-bullying messages can be shared through personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE), personal development and mutual understanding (PDMU) and personal and social education (PSE) lessons and school assemblies. For younger children circle time can be used to discuss feelings around friendships and worries they may have.

We've worked with the PSHE Association to create lesson plans for young people aged 10-16 on personal safety and healthy relationships. The resources for 10-11-year-olds include work on friendship.

Our Speak out Stay safe service for schools helps primary school children understand abuse in all its forms and know how to protect themselves.

As part of the Royal Foundation Taskforce on the Prevention of Cyberbullying we worked with a panel of young people to develop a campaign that would help others know what to do if they see bullying online. Our Stop, speak, support resource pack helps 11-16-year-olds think about how they respond to cyberbullying and what they can do to stop it spreading.

Link: <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/child-abuse-and-neglect/bullying/>