

Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

Introduction

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Step Teachers acknowledges the duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and is committed to ensuring a safeguarding practice that reflects statutory responsibilities, government guidance and complies with best practice requirements to safeguard and protect children from abuse and harm.

Step Teachers' vetting procedures are designed to surpass the requirements placed on us by the DfE's Keeping Children Safe in Education statutory guidance, Working Together to Safeguard Children and all other statutory obligations. We are REC Education members and have held the REC Audited Education award since its creation and prior to this we were holders of the DfE Quality Mark for several years before it was abolished.

All children, regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation or identity, have the right to equal protection from all types of abuse and harm.

This policy applies to all internal staff and candidates, (teachers, support staff and tutors) and is provided to staff at induction and to candidates as part of the registration process. It is then re-issued after every update and or annually. A child is defined as an individual up to the age of 18.

Legal Framework and Related Policies and Procedures

This policy works alongside these specific policies and guidance to cover all aspects of child safeguarding:

- DfE Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023
- The Human Rights Act 1998
- The Children Act 2006
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Guidance to Safer Working Practice for those working with children and young people in education settings
- Recruitment, Selection and Vetting Policy
- Managing Allegations Procedure and Policy
- Candidate Handbook
- Whistleblowing Policy

Our commitment to Safeguarding

- Step Teachers has robust safer recruitment processes that ensures that those who are known to be a risk to children do not gain access to them.

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- Staff and candidates are provided with training to understand their roles and responsibilities in respect to safeguarding to recognise, identify and respond to signs of abuse, neglect and other safeguarding concerns relating to children.
- Specialist trained staff that review and update policies and procedures as a minimum annually, unless an incident or new legislation or guidance suggests the need for an earlier review date.
- Step Teachers will report any concerns regarding any individual, or any potential safeguarding matter that it becomes aware of immediately in line with DfE and DBS recommended guidelines and will co-operate in any investigation.
- Confidential, detailed and accurate records of all safeguarding concerns are maintained and securely stored.

Safeguarding Training and Development

Step Teachers considers Safeguarding and Prevent training as essential for ensuring all children are protected. All Step Teachers candidates will receive and must complete at the registration stage and prior to any work being offered:

- Child Protection training which is then completed every 2 years. This will enable candidates to:
 - Know the various safeguarding laws and legislation they need to be aware of when working with children.
 - Recognise abuse, the different types of abuse and signs and indicators of abuse and neglect.
 - Confidentially respond to abuse or harm to a child and understand their responsibility when faced with a situation.
 - Report a concern, know who to report to, when this should take place and who to contact in an emergency.
 - Understand the importance of when to record a concern and what to record and how to follow up a concern.
- Prevent training which is then completed every 2 years.
- Signed declaration that they have read and understood Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024 (Part One). Annual updates to the Keeping Children Safe in Education statutory guidance are communicated to candidates via 'Hubspot' instructing them to read the latest guidance and sign a declaration, which is kept on the candidate's electronic file.

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- Candidates are expected to read and are provided with a link to the Guidance for Safer Working Practice for those working with children and young people in education settings at time of registration. Candidates are then asked to re-read this guidance annually as a minimum at the start of each academic year.
- Candidates are asked to complete a Safeguarding Refresher Quiz at the start of each academic year to assist us in identifying any gaps in their safeguarding knowledge. Further training/guidance will be given if required.
- Candidates will receive safeguarding and child protection updates as and when required and at least annually via email and e-bulletins.

Each academic year, we ask our client schools to provide us with their:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Online Safety Policy
- Health and Safety Policy

This is so that when we place a candidate into a school, we can provide them with these important policies before they start their position. In the absence of these policies, we ask our candidates to ask for these on their first day at the school and to ensure that as a minimum they know the name of the schools Designated Safeguarding Lead and Deputy.

Designated Safeguarding Lead

The role of the Designated Safeguarding Lead is to take responsibility for any safeguarding allegations and or concerns which are reported against our candidates and staff members.

Step Teacher's has a Designated Safeguarding Lead with overall responsibility and a Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead to ensure there is always appropriate cover.

They can be contacted on Tel: 020 8343 5469 – Email: safeguarding@stepteachers.co.uk

Duty of Care

All candidates who work with children are accountable for the way in which they exercise authority; manage risks; use resources; and safeguard children and young people. All candidates have a duty to keep children and young people safe and to protect them from sexual, physical and emotional harm. Children and young people have a right to be treated with respect and dignity. It follows that candidates are expected to take reasonable steps to ensure the safety and well-being of children and young people.

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The duty of care is in part, exercised through the development of respect and caring relationships between adults and children and young people. It is also exercised through the behaviour of the adult, which at all times should demonstrate integrity, maturity, and good judgement. Everyone expects high standards of behaviour from adults who work with children and young people. When candidates accept such work, they need to understand and acknowledge the responsibilities and trust inherent in that role.

Definitions of Abuse

Abuse is a form of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm or by failing to act to prevent harm. Harm can include ill treatment that is not physical as well as the impact of witnessing ill treatment of others. This can be particularly relevant for e.g., in relation to the impact on children of all forms of domestic abuse. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting by those known to them or more rarely by others. Abuse can take place wholly online or technology may be used to facilitate offline abuse. Children may be abused by an adult or adults or by another child or children.

Physical abuse

This is when someone hurts or harms a child on purpose and includes but not limited to, hitting with hands or objects, slapping and punching, kicking, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning and scalding, biting and scratching, breaking bones, drowning. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent/carer fabricates the symptoms of or deliberately induces, illness to the child.

Neglect

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance misuse. Once a child is born, it may involve a parent failing to provide adequate food clothing, and shelter; protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger; ensure adequate supervision; or ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

Emotional Abuse

The persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on the child. These may include interactions that are beyond a child's development capability as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning or preventing the child from participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing

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or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyberbullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children.

Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact including assault by penetration (for example rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children looking at or in the production of sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways or grooming a child in preparation for abuse. Sexual abuse can take place online and technology can be used to facilitate offline abuse. Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children. The sexual abuse of children by other children is a specific safeguarding issue in education.

Early Help and Safeguarding Issues

All candidates should be prepared to identify children who may benefit from early help. Early help means providing support as soon as a problem emerges at any point in a child's life.

All candidates should have an awareness of safeguarding issues that can put children at risk of harm. Behaviours linked to issues such as drug taking and or alcohol misuse, deliberately missing education, serious violence (including that linked to county lines), radicalisation and consensual and non-consensual sharing of nude and semi-nude images and or videos can be signs that children are at risk.

Child-on-Child-Abuse

Children can abuse other children and that it can happen both inside and outside of school and online. Child-on-child abuse may take different forms, such as bullying (including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying); abuse in intimate personal relationships between children (also known as teenage relationship abuse): physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling or otherwise causing physical harm; sexual violence, such as rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault; sexual harassment such as sexual comments, remarks jokes and online sexual harassment; causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent, such as forcing someone to strip, touch themselves sexually, or to engage in sexual activity with a third party; consensual and non-consensual sharing of nude and semi-nude images and or videos (also known as sexting or youth produced sexual imagery); upskirting, which typically involves taking a picture under a person's clothing without their permission, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress, or alarm and initiation/hazing type violence and rituals.

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It is essential that all staff and candidates understand the importance of challenging inappropriate behaviours between children that are abusive in nature. Downplaying certain behaviours, for e.g., dismissing sexual harassment as “just banter”, “just having a laugh”, “part of growing up” or “boys being boys” can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviours, an unsafe environment for children and in worst case scenarios a culture that normalises abuse leading to children accepting it as normal and not coming forward to report it.

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)

These are both forms of abuse that occur where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance in power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child into taking part in sexual or criminal activity, in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator and/or through violence or the threat of violence. CSE and CCE can affect children, both male and female and can include children who have been moved (commonly referred to as trafficking) for the purpose of exploitation.

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

CSE is a form of child sexual abuse. Sexual abuse may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or nonpenetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing, and touching outside clothing. It may include noncontact activities, such as involving children in the production of sexual images, forcing children to look at sexual images or watch sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways or grooming a child in preparation for abuse including via the internet.

CSE can occur over time or be a one-off occurrence and may happen without the child’s immediate knowledge for example through others sharing videos or images of them on social media. CSE can affect any child who has been coerced into engaging in sexual activities. This includes 16- and 17-year-olds who can legally consent to have sex. Some children may not realise they are being exploited for example they believe they are in a genuine romantic relationship.

Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)

Some specific forms of CCE can include children being forced or manipulated into transporting drugs or money through county lines, working in cannabis factories, shoplifting, or pickpocketing. They can also be forced or manipulated into committing vehicle crime or threatening/committing serious violence to others. Children can become trapped by this type of exploitation, as perpetrators can threaten victims (and their families) with violence or entrap and coerce them into debt. They may be coerced into carrying weapons such as knives or begin to carry a knife for a sense of protection from harm from others.

As children involved in criminal exploitation often commit crimes themselves, their vulnerability as victims is not always recognised by adults and professionals, (particularly older children), and they are not treated as victims despite the harm they have experienced. They may still have been

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criminally exploited even if the activity appears to be something they have agreed or consented to. It is important to note that the experience of girls who are criminally exploited can be very different to that of boys. The indicators may not be the same, however professionals should be aware that girls are at risk of criminal exploitation too. It is also important to note that both boys and girls being criminally exploited may be at higher risk of sexual exploitation.

Children with special educational needs, disabilities or health issues

Children with special educational needs, disabilities or health issues are at an increased risk of being abused. There are several factors that contribute to this; more likely to receive intimate care from more people; likely to spend more time away from the family; less or not able to communicate; adults may mistake the indicators or abuse for signs of a child's disability; children with disabilities are less likely to disclose abuse.

Additional barriers can exist when recognising abuse in this group of children. This can include:

- Assumptions that indicators of possible abuse such as behaviour, mood and injury relate to the child's condition without further explanation
- These children being more prone to peer group isolation or bullying (including prejudice-based bullying) than other children
- The potential for children with SEND or certain medical conditions being disproportionately impacted by behaviours such as bullying, without outwardly showing any signs and
- Communication barriers and difficulties in managing or reporting these challenges
- Cognitive understanding – being unable to understand the difference between fact and fiction in online content and then repeating the content/behaviours in schools or colleges or the consequences of doing so

The SEND Code of Practice can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25>

Female Genital Mutilation (FMG)

FMG is illegal and is when a female's genitals are deliberately altered or removed for non-medical reasons. It can involve partial or total removal of the external female genitalia. If staff have any concerns about FMG they should speak to the Designated Safeguarding Lead in the school, but a teacher has a legal duty to report to the police; if in the course of their work in the profession, discovers that an act of FMG appears to have been carried out on a girl under the age of 18.

Further guidance and resources on FMG can be found on this link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/female-genital-mutilation-resource-pack/female-genital-mutilation-resource-pack>

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Mental Health

All staff should be aware that mental health problems can, in some cases, be an indicator that a child has suffered or is at risk of suffering abuse, neglect or exploitation. Only appropriately trained professionals should attempt to make a diagnosis of a mental health problem. Education staff, however, are well placed to observe children regularly and identify those whose behaviour suggests that they may be experiencing a mental health problem or be at risk of developing one.

More information can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mental-health-and-behaviour-in-schools--2>

Domestic Abuse

Under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, children that witness domestic abuse and or violence that occurs between family members, including ex-partners are themselves identified as being victims, due to the serious, long lasting emotional and psychological impact this can have. In some cases, a child may blame themselves for the abuse or may have had to leave the family home as a result.

Domestic abuse can encompass a wide range of behaviours and may be a single incident or a pattern of incidents. That abuse can be but is not limited to emotional; physical; sexual; financial; economical; coercive and controlling behaviour. Children may see, hear, or experience the effects of abuse at home and/or suffer domestic abuse in their own intimate relationships (teenage relationship abuse). All of this can have a detrimental and long-term impact on their health, well-being, development, and ability to learn.

Anyone can be a victim of domestic abuse, regardless of sexual identity, age, ethnicity, socio-economic status, sexuality or background and domestic abuse can take place inside or outside of the home.

Radicalisation and Extremism

Radicalisation is defined as the act or process of making a person more radical or favouring of extreme or fundamental changes in political, economic or social conditions, institutions or habits of the mind.

Extremism is defined as the holding of extreme political or religious views. Staff have a duty to report concerns about students in line with the Prevent Guidance, if they suspect that a child is at risk of radicalisation. These concerns should be passed on to the Designated Safeguarding Lead in the school.

The Home Office have produced key resources, workshops and training programmes to help you understand Prevent and how to keep students safe from extremism and radicalisation. This can be found on the following link: www.elearning.prevent.homeoffice.gov.uk

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Step Teachers will refer any member of its workforce who they believe has attempted to radicalise students or preach extremist ideas to the Police.

Online Safety

All candidates must read and familiarise themselves with the school's online safety policy on the use of mobile and smart technology. Amongst other things this will reflect the fact many children have unlimited and unrestricted access to the internet via mobile phone networks. This access means some children, whilst at school or college, sexually harass, bully, and control others via their mobile and smart technology, share indecent images consensually and non-consensually (often via large chat groups) and view and share pornography and other harmful content.

All candidates should ensure that they establish safe and responsible online behaviours, working to local and national guidelines. The breadth of issues classified within online safety is considerable but can be categorised into four areas of risk:

content: being exposed to illegal, inappropriate, or harmful content, for example: pornography, fake news, racism, misogyny, self-harm, suicide, anti-Semitism, radicalisation, and extremism.

contact: being subjected to harmful online interaction with other users; for example: peer to peer pressure, commercial advertising and adults posing as children or young adults with the intention to groom or exploit them for sexual, criminal, financial or other purposes.

conduct: online behaviour that increases the likelihood of, or causes, harm; for example, making, sending, and receiving explicit images (e.g., consensual and non-consensual sharing of nudes and semi-nudes and/or pornography, sharing other explicit images and online bullying).

commerce: risks such as online gambling, inappropriate advertising, phishing and or financial scams. If you feel your pupils, students or staff are at risk, please report it to the Anti-Phishing Working Group (<https://apwg.org/>).

Communication with children both in the 'real' world and through web based and telecommunication interactions should take place within explicit professional boundaries. This includes the use of computers, tablets, phones, texts, e-mails, instant messages, social media such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter, chatrooms, forums, blogs, websites, gaming sites, digital cameras, videos, webcams and other handheld devices. (Please note this is not an exhaustive list).

Candidates should not request or respond to any personal information from children other than which may be necessary in their professional role. They should ensure that their communications are open and transparent and avoid any communication which could be interpreted as grooming behaviour'.

Candidates should not give their personal details to children, for e.g., email address, home or mobile phone numbers, details of web-based identities. If children locate these by any other means and attempt to contact or correspond with the Supply Staff member, they should not respond and must report the matter immediately to their line manager. Supply staff should not accept any 'friend requests' on social media.

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In line with Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024, all schools and education settings have a responsibility to implement effective filtering and monitoring systems on their IT systems to ensure that children are safeguarded from potential harmful and inappropriate online material. These should be analysed and assessed regularly to ensure their effectiveness whilst recognising that 'over-blocking' should not lead to unreasonable restrictions as to what children can be taught.

If a candidate believes or observes that a child has accessed harmful sites/content that should have been blocked by the schools filtering and monitoring systems they must report this immediately to the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead.

More information about the filtering and monitoring responsibilities of education settings can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/meeting-digital-and-technology-standards-in-schools-and-colleges/filtering-and-monitoring-standards-for-schools-and-colleges>

The UK Safer Internet Centre has produced some further information about Online Safety

<https://saferinternet.org.uk/guide-and-resource/teachers-and-school-staff>

Identifying abuse

All staff and candidates should be aware of indicators of abuse and neglect, understanding that children can be at risk of harm inside and outside of the school, inside and outside of home and online.

Below is a list of some signs that a child is being abused. This is by no means an exhaustive list of signs that a child is being abused and it is not your responsibility to determine or investigate if a child is/has been abused but to report your concerns:

- Unexplained changes in behaviour or personality
- Bruises and injuries that do not reflect the activity the child is involved in
- Explanation that does not confirm with the injury
- Becoming withdrawn or seeming anxious
- Becoming uncharacteristically aggressive
- Lacks social skills and has few friends, if any
- Poor bond or relationship with parent/carer
- Knowledge of adult issues inappropriate for their age
- Uses sexually explicit language and actions
- Running away or being frequently absent from education
- Always choosing to wear clothes which cover their body
- Looking unkempt and uncared for
- Self-Harm
- A change in friendship or relationships with older individuals
- Unexplained gifts or new possessions

Dealing with a disclosure

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It takes courage for a child to disclose that he or she is being or has been abused. Some children may not feel ready or know how to tell someone that they are being abused, exploited, or neglected. Children may feel embarrassed humiliated or are being threatened. This could be due to their vulnerability, disability and or sexual orientation or language barriers. This should not prevent you from having professional curiosity and speaking to the Designated Safeguarding Lead if you have concerns about a child.

Candidates must always have an attitude of 'it could happen here' where safeguarding is concerned. When concerned about the welfare of a child, candidates should always act in the best interest of the child. If candidates have any concern about a child's welfare, they should act on them immediately, following the school's child protection policy and speak to the designated safeguarding lead or deputy.

All candidates are expected to read and familiarise themselves with each individual school's child protection policy and know where they can locate the Designated Safeguarding Lead and Deputy on their first day at the school or before their first Online Tutoring session.

If a child makes a disclosure to you, the following procedure should be followed:

Do:

- Listen and accept.
- Try not to interrupt.
- Tell the child they've done the right thing by telling you.
- Show that you are taking the child seriously and that you understand and believe them.
- Inform the child of what you are going to do.
- Make accurate notes using the child's own words as soon as possible
- Inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead in the school as soon as possible, do not delay.

Don't:

- Promise confidentiality – you will need to share information with others to ensure that appropriate action is taken and dealt with.
- Investigate.
- Ask leading questions.
- Jump to conclusions.
- Ask the child to repeat the disclosure several times.
- Destroy any evidence as it may be used later in a court of law.

Please remember that any initial disclosure even if retracted must still be reported.

If in exceptional circumstances, the designated safeguarding lead or deputy is not available, this should not delay appropriate action being taken. A member of the senior leadership team should be approached, and the agency's Designated Safeguarding Lead should be contacted without delay.

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In an Emergency, if you believe that a child is in immediate danger; is at risk of harm, there is a serious incident or the child is in need of medical attention or a crime may have been committed, call 999.

If you find the disclosure is causing you distress, finding it difficult to cope or would like to talk through any issue, ensure that you seek support. Remember there is free confidential support available to you through your Step Perks portal, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Low-Level Concerns

The term 'low-level' concern does not mean that it is insignificant. A low-level concern is any concern – no matter how small, and even if no more than causing a sense of unease or a 'nagging doubt' – that an adult working in or on behalf of a school may have acted in a way that:

- Is inconsistent with the staff code of conduct, including inappropriate conduct outside of work and
- Does not meet the harm threshold or is otherwise not serious enough to consider a referral to LADO.

We ask that you make considerations of our Safeguarding Policies and Code of Conduct in this handbook alongside that of the client school.

Examples of such behaviour could include, but are not limited to:

- Being over friendly with children.
- Having favourites.
- Taking photographs of children on their mobile phone, contract to school policy.
- Engaging with a child on a one-to-one basis in a secluded area or behind a closed door.
- Humiliating children.

Such behaviour can exist on a wide spectrum, from the inadvertent or thoughtless, or behaviour that may look to be inappropriate, but might not be in specific circumstances, through to that which is ultimately intended to enable abuse. It is important that you are clear about what appropriate behaviour is and are confident in distinguishing expected and appropriate behaviour from inappropriate, problematic or concerning behaviour, in yourself and others.

Low-level concerns can be self-referred, where for example you have found yourself in a situation which could be misinterpreted, might appear compromising to other and/or on reflection you believe you have behaved in such a way that you consider it falls below the expected professional standards/code of conduct.

Low-level concerns should be shared confidentially with the Head Teacher of the school and the Step Teacher's Designated Safeguarding Lead. Low-level concerns should be recorded in writing and should include details of the concern and the context in which the concern arose.

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Confidential and Information Sharing

Information sharing is essential for effective safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. Step Teachers is guided by the DfE Advice for Practitioners Providing Safeguarding Services to Children, Young People, Parents and Carers.

This advice includes the seven golden rules for sharing information and considerations with regard to the Data Protection Act 2018 and General Data Protection Regulation. Fears about sharing information must not be allowed to stand in the way of the need to promote the welfare and protect the safety of children. If in any doubt about sharing information, candidates should speak to the designated safeguarding lead or deputy.

All information must be treated in the strictest of confidence and only shared on a need-to-know basis. You must not discuss with colleagues, friends or family.

Referral to Relevant Authorities

With cases where Step Teachers have ceased to use the services of a candidate or might have ceased to use those services had the candidate not ceased to provide them following an allegation/concern, the Step Teachers Designated Safeguarding Lead will make a referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service and the Teaching Regulation Agency where necessary.

Reviewed 09/2024