



Department  
for Education

# **Out-of-School Settings Safeguarding Call for Evidence**

**Government Call for Evidence**

**Launch date 29 May 2025**

**Respond by 21 September 2025**

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## Introduction

The Department for Education (DfE) is calling for evidence to inform the development of Government policy on safeguarding in the Out-of-Schools Setting (OOSS) sector. This sector covers a broad and diverse range of providers (both organisations and individuals) offering tuition, training, instruction or enrichment activities for children. These can include settings such as supplementary schools, tuition centres and private tutors, extra-curricular clubs and activities (such as sports and arts), uniformed youth organisations (such as Scouts and Brownies), holiday camps and activity centres, as well as religious settings offering tuition or education in their own faith. A full definition and exclusion list is available from paragraphs 2.1 to 2.3.

Interested individuals and organisations are invited to consider potential approaches to long-term reform designed to increase awareness and understanding of safeguarding, and enhance overall safety of the sector. Our questions are aimed at building our evidence base on existing practices and challenges facing parents and carers, and providers, in assuring themselves as to the safety of settings.

## Who this is for

This call for evidence is open to any interested individual or organisation. However, the Department is particularly interested in hearing from:

- Parents and carers
- Children
- OOSS providers
- Local authorities
- Other organisations with safeguarding responsibilities or an interest/role in safeguarding children (such as Ofsted, the Police, integrated care boards and relevant health partners, the Children's Commissioner, the Charity Commission for England and Wales, the NSPCC)
- Accreditation bodies
- Schools and colleges
- Individuals doing paid or unpaid work in any of the above organisations.

## Issue date

The consultation was issued on 29 May 2025.

## Enquiries

If your enquiry is related to the policy content of the call for evidence, you can contact the team by email: [ooss.policy@education.gov.uk](mailto:ooss.policy@education.gov.uk)

If your enquiry is related to the DfE e-consultation website or the consultation process in general, you can contact the DfE Ministerial and Public Communications Division by email: [coordinator.consultations@education.gov.uk](mailto:coordinator.consultations@education.gov.uk), telephone: 0370 000 2288 or via the [DfE Contact us page](#).

## Additional copies

Additional copies are available electronically and can be downloaded from [GOV.UK DfE consultations](#).

## The response

The results of the consultation and the department's response will be [published on GOV.UK](#) following analysis of the responses in 2025.

## About this call for evidence

The safeguarding of children is critically important in all education and childcare settings, including OOSS. We want to ensure that parents and carers feel confident in choosing safe settings for their children.

This call for evidence seeks your input on existing safeguarding practices in OOSS, as well as potential options for further strengthening safeguarding. We aim to learn more about how respondents currently assure themselves, or provide assurances, as to settings safety; any challenges to doing so; and what further support or action may be needed to make these settings safer.

The evidence gained will be used to inform consideration of longer-term proposals to further enhance the safety of the OOSS sector, and to instil parents and carers with confidence that they are choosing safe settings for their children.

## Respond online

To help us analyse the responses please use the online system wherever possible. Visit [DfE consultations on GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/consultations) to submit your response.

## Other ways to respond

If for exceptional reasons, you are unable to use the online system, for example because you use specialist accessibility software that is not compatible with the system, you may request an alternative format of the form.

### By email

- [OOSS.policy@education.gov.uk](mailto:OOSS.policy@education.gov.uk)

### By post

Out-of-school settings: Call for evidence,  
Department for Education,  
Sanctuary Buildings,  
Great Smith Street,  
London,  
SW1P 3BT

## Deadline

The consultation closes on 21 September 2025.

## Section 1 – Respondent information

1.1. By telling us more about you, your position, and where you work, we can better understand your responses and your perspective.

### Question 1

Are you responding as an individual or on behalf of an organisation?

- a) Individual
- b) Organisation

### Question 2

Please select your age:

- a) Under 12
- b) 13-18
- c) Over 18

### Question 3

What is your ethnic group? Choose one option that best describes your ethnic group or background.

- a) White British
- b) White Irish
- c) White: other white background
- d) Mixed: White and Black Caribbean
- e) Mixed: White and Black African
- f) Mixed: White and Asian
- g) Mixed: other mixed background
- h) Asian or Asian British: Indian
- i) Asian or Asian British: Pakistani
- j) Asian or Asian British: Bangladeshi
- k) Asian or Asian British: Other Asian Background
- l) Black or Black British: Caribbean
- m) Black or Black British: British African
- n) Black or Black British: Other black background
- o) Any other ethnic group
- p) Don't know
- q) Prefer not to say

### Question 4

What is your religious group? Choose one option that best describes your religious group or background.

- a) Buddhist
- b) Christian
- c) Hindu

- d) Jewish
- e) Muslim
- f) Sikh
- g) Other religion
- h) No Religion
- i) Prefer not to say

**Question 5**

Your responses to this call for evidence will be visible to the Out-of-School Settings policy team in the Department for Education to inform ongoing policy development. The information gathered from respondents to this Call for Evidence will be used internally within DfE and aggregated analysis in a summary report. DfE will not share any information which may identify an individual or organisation outside of the department. Organisations will be identified in the analysis, but not their direct responses. Would you like us to keep your comments anonymous?

- A) Yes
- B) No



## Section 2 – Summary and definitions

- 2.1. OOSS are a big part of most children and young people's lives; for instance, a survey shows around 80% of 10-15 year olds engage in at least one extra-curricular activity and over 40% participate in youth clubs, uniformed groups or other organised activities which are often provided by an OOSS.<sup>1</sup> OOSS have the potential to provide enriching education and activities for children that can help a child achieve and thrive. This Call for Evidence focuses on safety in these settings.
- 2.2. We have worked closely with the OOSS sector, safeguarding partners, and parent groups on how to raise standards and help parents safeguard their children. The existing guidance on safeguarding for [parents and carers](#)<sup>2</sup> and [providers](#)<sup>3</sup> [was updated in 2023](#). We are also currently strengthening existing guidance for local authorities and are launching a free-to-access e-learning package, to make our safeguarding guidance more accessible.
- 2.3. This call for evidence follows an [independent report \(published November 2022\)](#)<sup>4</sup> which evaluated a pilot programme which took place from 2018 to 2020 in selected local authorities, aimed at boosting local capacity to identify and intervene in OOSS of concern. Although focused on a relatively small sample of OOSS, the report did highlight safeguarding risks in some settings. This echoes the findings of the [Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse](#) which noted how OOSS were not regulated. The DfE recognises the seriousness of these findings and the potential for harm in some OOSS.
- 2.4. We hope that this call for evidence can inform future options and support action where settings fail to safeguard and promote children's welfare. We want to understand where the risks are and how to ensure any mitigations are effectively targeted at the appropriate activities and settings.

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<sup>1</sup> Figures 9 and 19, [An Unequal Playing Field: Extra-Curricular Activities, Soft Skills and Social Mobility](#) Research carried out for the Social Mobility Commission, 2019

<sup>2</sup> [Using after-school clubs, tuition and community activities](#)

<sup>3</sup> [After-school clubs, community activities, and tuition: Safeguarding guidance for providers](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Oversight of out-of-school settings: lessons learnt from the DfE funded pilot](#)

## Definitions

### The Settings

- 2.5. 'Out-of-School Settings' cover many different organisations and individuals who provide an enormous variety of activities for children. The DfE acknowledges that parents, carers, and providers may refer to these settings in different and specific ways. Many are part of proud communities, with unique identities, membership bodies and ways of defining themselves. As such, they may not identify as, or be unfamiliar with, the term 'out-of-school settings' – and think of themselves within sector specific provision (such as youth football clubs, summer schools, tutors).
- 2.6. The DfE uses the general term "out-of-school settings", or the abbreviation "OOSS", to capture the full range of this provision. By OOSS, we mean: any organisation or individuals that provide tuition, training, instruction or activities to children in England, without their parents' or carers' supervision.
- 2.7. However, this explicitly **excludes**:
- Schools<sup>5</sup>
  - Colleges<sup>6</sup>
  - 16 to 19 academies
  - Alternative Provision<sup>7</sup> arranged by local authorities or schools
  - providers caring for children that are registered with Ofsted or a childminder agency<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> 'School' means all schools whether maintained, non-maintained, or independent, including academies and free schools, alternative provision academies, and pupil referral units. It includes maintained nursery schools. Schools are considered to operate on a full-time basis and offer a full curriculum.

<sup>6</sup> 'College' means further education colleges and sixth-form colleges as established under the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 and institutions designated as being within the further education sector. College also means providers of post-16 Education as set out in the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.

<sup>7</sup> The definition of Alternative Provision is set out in the [AP statutory guidance](#). We recognise that some settings offering alternative provision may also choose to offer education and activities to parents as part of home-education and/or extra-curricular activities.

<sup>8</sup> Most providers caring for children under 8-years-old must register with Ofsted (on the Early Years Register or the compulsory part of the Childcare Register) or a childminder agency, unless the law states otherwise. Exemptions are set out in the Childcare (Exemptions from Registration) Order 2008 and are summarised in [Childminders and childcare providers: register with Ofsted](#). Providers who are exempt from compulsory registration may still apply to register on the voluntary part of the Childcare Register if they meet its requirements.

- As such, OOSS do not currently meet any requirements for compulsory registration and regulation.

2.8. OOSS providers can include, but are not limited to:

- tuition companies, individual tutors or learning centres (used to support mainstream or home education)
- extracurricular clubs or settings, for example:
  - dance classes
  - sports tuition, such as gymnastics and martial arts training
  - musical instrument tuition
  - drama classes
- uniformed youth organisations, for example:
  - Scouts
  - Girl Guides
  - St John's Ambulance Cadets
- open-access youth providers, for example, centre-based and detached youth work
- holiday camps, residential centre and outdoor education centres (if not under parental or school supervision)
- providers of supplementary education (sometimes called supplementary or complementary schools)
- private language centres, including those for children coming from abroad
- religious settings offering supplementary education regarding faith, culture and religious texts or preparations for religious rites of passage, for example:
  - Christian church-based children and youth activities (such as Sunday schools or clubs)
  - Hindu temples
  - Jewish yeshivas and cheders
  - Muslim madrassahs
  - Sikh gurdwaras

2.9. These settings may operate outside of normal school hours or part-time during school hours (for example, to aide elective home education). They can also occur in many different types of venue, including, a person's home, community and youth centres, sports clubs, places of worship, as well as schools or colleges<sup>9</sup>. These settings should be supplementary to the main

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<sup>9</sup> If a school or college staff directly supervises or is responsible for the provision, it is not considered an OOSS. This provision will follow the school's or college's child protection arrangements under the Ofsted Framework. If another organisation or individual provides the provision on school or college

provision of a child's education (such as at a school, nursery or college), and attendance of an OOSS should never be the main source of a child's education.

## The People

- 2.10. This call for evidence uses the terms “children” to mean “people who have not yet reached their 18th birthday” – in alignment with the 1989 Children Act's definition of ‘child’ as ‘a person under the age of 18’.

## The Topic

- 2.11. Safeguarding is the protection of a person's health, wellbeing and human rights, enabling them to live free from harm abuse and neglect. It involves working together to prevent and stop abuse or neglect.
- 2.12. In this call for evidence the term “safeguarding, and promoting the welfare of children”<sup>10</sup> is defined as:
- Protecting children from maltreatment
  - Preventing impairment of children's physical and mental health or development
  - Ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care
  - Taking action if you identify or have concerns that children are suffering from, or are at risk of, harm.
  - Providing help and support to meet the needs of children as soon as problems emerge
  -
- 2.13. The types of harm from which children could be at risk of include: physical abuse; emotional abuse; sexual abuse; neglect; child-on-child abuse, child criminal and/or sexual exploitation, domestic abuse, female genital mutilation, mental health abuse, serious violence;<sup>11</sup> and extremism and radicalisation.

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premises, it is likely considered an OOSS. The governing body must ensure minimum safeguarding requirements are met, following the statutory guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education.

<sup>10</sup> Aligned with [Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024](#)

<sup>11</sup> Taken from Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024

## Questions about respondents' involvement with OOSS

### Question 6

In what capacity are you **primarily** responding?

Please note – this response will affect how we analyse your responses. This is to help us understand responses by different groups, and make sure we use your time best by showing you the most relevant questions to you.

We know that your answers to some questions may differ depending on whether you are considering them from the perspective of being a parent, or in another capacity. Please select the option below from which you primarily will be answering however if you wish to respond in different capacities, please complete and submit separate responses for each.

- a) Parent or carer of a child who uses OOSS
- b) Child/young person who uses OOSS
- c) Volunteer in an OOSS
- d) Paid Staff member in an OOSS
- e) Owner-Operator or Paid Senior Leadership in an OOSS
- f) Owner of an OOSS
- g) Volunteer or paid staff member in a safeguarding organisation (such as NSPCC)
- h) Volunteer or paid staff member in a sector-specific organisation (such as Sport England, or the National Youth Agency)
- i) Volunteer or paid staff member in a local authority
- j) Volunteer or paid staff member in another public body (such as police, school or NHS)
- k) If other, please state:

### Question 7

If you are answering on behalf of an organisation, are you the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or deputy DSL? If you are answering as an individual, please select N/A.

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) N/A

### Question 8

Please specify the relevant Local Authority where the OOSS you use, work in or work with are located

Free text:

### Question 9

What do you consider to be the **main focus** of the primary OOSS you are responding in relation to?

Please note – We recognise that you may be involved in multiple OOSS so please select the option of the setting you are primarily involved with. We will ask you to answer later questions, with this OOSS-type in mind, and refer to it as ‘your Primary OOSS’ throughout.

We know that your answers to some questions may differ depending on the type of OOSS you choose below, so if you wish to respond in different capacities, please complete and submit separate responses for each.

- a) Charity or other voluntary organisation
- b) Childcare Provision
- c) Creative, performing arts and hobby-based (such as music, arts, dance, craft, and drama)
- d) Faith-based (such as madrassahs, cheders, or church groups)
- e) Supplementary education/schools
- f) Other activity provider (holiday camps, residential centre and outdoor education centres)
- g) Sports-based (such as a football club)
- h) Supplementary Language, Culture or Heritage Schools
- i) Tutor-groups, tuition companies, and other supplementary study groups
- j) Youth centre, club or group
- k) Uniformed youth organisation (such as the Scouts or Girl Guiding)
- l) Other – free text

### Question 10

Apart from the primary organisation you are responding in relation to, what is the focus of any other OOSS you or your child are also involved with?

- a) Charity or other voluntary organisation
- b) Childcare Provision
- c) Creative, performing arts and hobby-based (such as music, arts, dance, craft, and drama)
- d) Faith-based (such as madrassahs, cheders, or church groups)
- e) Supplementary education/schools
- f) Other activity provider (holiday camps, residential centre and outdoor education centres)
- g) Sports-based (such as a football club)
- h) Supplementary Language, Culture or Heritage Schools
- i) Tutor-groups, tuition companies, and other study groups
- j) Youth centre, club or group
- k) Uniformed youth organisation (such as the Scouts or Girl Guiding)

l) Other – free text

**Question 11**

How many years have you worked with children in OOSS, or related areas? If you are responding as an individual, please select N/A.

- a) Less than 1 year
- b) 1-2 years
- c) 3-5 years
- d) 6-10 years
- e) Longer than 10 years

**Question 12**

What age are the children in the primary OOSS you use, are involved in or responding on behalf of?

- a) 0-4 years
- b) 5-7 years
- c) 8-10 years
- d) 11-16 years
- e) 17-18 years

## Section 3 - Background and Questions about Safeguarding

- 3.1. The government is committed to safeguarding all children. We want to protect children from the risk of harm, and everyone who comes into contact with children and their families, has a role to play.
- 3.2. Over half of children attend some sort of OOSS<sup>12</sup>, with many examples of settings which create a positive environment for them to flourish, engage in new opportunities, and interact with their peers.
- 3.3. However, unlike many other educational settings such as schools and colleges, OOSS are not subject to mandatory regulation under education and childcare law. This means that there is no central register or required membership of a larger, umbrella organisation (such as the Football Association) and no required inspections or compulsory regular engagement with the local authority. There are no mandatory qualifications or training for providers, staff and volunteers in order to operate or work in an OOSS. Similarly, though many OOSS do choose to undertake them, DBS checks are not mandatory in the same way they would be in a school or college.
- 3.4. Safeguarding standards can be impacted by relative inexperience of some of the smaller settings, as well as the frequency of changes in many OOSS - new settings may open, close, and change their name, and similarly changes in staffing, or reliance on new volunteers are common.
- 3.5. OOSS providers do have a common law duty of care to protect the safety and welfare of children that attend them. DfE has published voluntary [safeguarding guidance for out-of-school settings](#) to support them in meeting this duty. Where providers fail to protect and keep children safe, local authorities have legal powers to take action.
- 3.6. Although there is no requirement to do so, many providers are part of a wider association or umbrella organisation, which often provide safeguarding plan templates and set out safety standards. Many settings also subscribe to local or national voluntary accreditation schemes to provide parents and carers with confidence in the provision. We are keen to understand more about what

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<sup>12</sup> [Parent, pupil and learner panel 22/23 April/May wave](#) shows that two-thirds of parents reported their child regularly attends a club or activity outside of school - as did half of pupils.



advice and assistance is available to settings, and what additional support would be welcome.

- 3.7. We know that OOSS vary considerably – by size, location, educational focus, for-profit or voluntary basis and so on. It is precisely because the sector is so diverse, and often operates outside the oversight of local and national government, that our evidence base is weaker than for schools and colleges, for instance.

## Questions about your awareness and understanding of safeguarding in Out-of-School Settings

The questions below will help Government understand respondents' views and experiences, regarding current safeguarding practices, communication, priorities and engagement with existing safeguarding measures.

### Question 13

Parents are currently responsible for the decision on whether an OOSS is safe for their child, and OOSS make the decisions on what safeguarding measures are appropriate. Did you know this?

- a) Yes, definitely aware of this
- b) Yes, I think so
- c) No
- d) Don't know

### Question 14

Before receiving this call for evidence, were you aware that OOSS are currently unregulated?

- a) Yes, definitely aware of this
- b) Yes, I think so
- c) No
- d) Don't know

### Question 15

Before receiving this call for evidence, were you aware that, although many do, OOSS are not required to do DBS checks on their staff?

- a) Yes, definitely aware of this
- b) Yes, I think so
- c) No
- d) Don't know

### Question 16

What safeguarding measures do you think there should be in all OOSS?

[free text]

### Question 17

If you had a concern about safeguarding standards within an OOSS, where would you go to report that issue?

- a) A designated safeguarding lead within the OOSS
- b) Someone else within the OOSS

- c) The school of the affected child
- d) A regional/national body or accreditor appropriate to that type of OOSS (such as The Football Association, for a football club)
- e) The Department for Education
- f) The Police
- g) The NSPCC
- h) Ofsted
- i) The local authority
- j) Another organisation – free text
- k) I wouldn't report the issue
- l) I don't know

### Question 16

Which of the following are your **primary** sources for information on safeguarding in OOSS? (select up to three)

- a) My colleagues
- b) Parents/carers of children attending
- c) Schools
- d) The OOSS themselves
- e) The local authority
- f) Government websites and guidance about OOSS, specifically [for providers](#), and [for parents and carers](#)
- g) Other Government guidance on safeguarding children (such as [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#); and [Working Together to Safeguarding Children](#))
- h) Safeguarding bodies and charities websites (such as the NSPCC website, or Childline)
- i) Sector-specific organisations (such as the Football Association for a football club)
- j) I haven't sought information on safeguarding for OOSS
- k) Other

## Government Action on Safeguarding Out-of-School Settings

- 3.8. Between Autumn 2018 to December 2021, the DfE funded a £3 million pilot programme for local authorities to test approaches for identifying, mapping and taking action on risks in the OOSS sector.

- 3.9. The independent evaluation from these pilots was published in November 2022<sup>13</sup> and demonstrated potential for harm in a small number of settings, including: health and safety concerns, risk of abuse, inadequate safeguarding checks, extremism and radicalisation.
- 3.10. Since then, the DfE has advanced a package of measures to enhance OOSS safeguarding, including:
- a refresh of our [safeguarding code of practice for providers](#), and accompanying [guidance for parents and carers](#) (published 19 September 2023).
  - strengthening guidance for local authorities on OOSS safeguarding (updated alongside this call for evidence), on the range of legal powers available to identify and intervene in settings of concern.
  - the development of free to access [e-learning](#) for providers (launched alongside this call for evidence) to complement the Code of Practice.

## Government Action on Wider Safeguarding

- 3.11. The Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) was a statutory inquiry in England and Wales, established on 12 March 2015. It investigated whether public bodies and other non-state institutions had taken seriously their duty of care to protect children from sexual abuse. IICSA ran a programme of research and seminars, which enabled over 7000 victims and survivors to tell their stories anonymously.
- 3.12. IICSA published several reports (many responding to specific investigations or aimed at particular organisations). Some of these were focused on, or particularly relevant to OOSS safeguarding (such as the [report regarding child protection in religious organisations and settings](#)).
- 3.13. IICSA published a final report in October 2022 with 20 recommendations to Government. The previous government responded to this report on 22 May 2023. Their response included commitments relevant to OOSS, such as:
- ‘look at options to address any gaps in non-regulated sectors, such as out-of-school settings’ – underway through this call for evidence
  - ‘updating our safeguarding code of practice for out-of-school settings’ – completed as outlined in paragraph 5.9 above

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<sup>13</sup> [Oversight of out-of-school settings: lessons learnt from the DfE funded pilot](#)

- ‘review and strengthen our existing local authority guidance on safeguarding children in unregistered independent schools and out-of-school settings’ – completed as outlined in paragraph 5.9 above
  - ‘implement a mandatory reporting regime for child sexual abuse’ – a call for evidence on mandatory reporting was published alongside the Government’s response to IICSA, and the Home Secretary announced further action on mandatory reporting in Parliament in January 2025.
- 3.14. The government’s latest response to the recommendations of IICSA ([Tackling child sexual abuse: Progress Update](#)) was published in April 2025. The update details the government’s ongoing commitment to prevent child sexual abuse, protecting children from harm, and supporting victims and survivors. This update set out the steps the government will take to act on the recommendations in the final report of IICSA, which included committing to this call for evidence to improve the government’s understanding of safeguarding in OOSS.
- 3.15. The Government’s statutory guidance ‘[Working Together to Safeguard Children](#)’, which applies to every individual, agency and organisation that comes into contact with children, sets out how they should collaborate to help, support and protect children. It tells safeguarding partners (police, health, local authorities) how they should work with each other, and with other partners locally, including education providers and childcare settings, to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in their area.
- 3.16. Working Together was strengthened in 2023, including updates highlighting the importance of considering naming and engaging with voluntary, charity, social enterprise organisations and sports clubs (which include many OOSS) in published local arrangements. This means OOSS should be aware that they: could be legally required to collaborate with local safeguarding partners; have responsibilities for safeguarding children; and need to know how to respond to and refer child protection concerns if necessary.

## Questions about government guidance on safeguarding in OOSS

### Question 19

Are you already aware of either the existing government guidance for [parents and carers](#), and [providers](#), or the explanatory safeguarding [posters](#) and [leaflet](#)?

- a) Yes
- b) No

c) Unsure

**Question 20**

To what extent do you agree or disagree that the existing government guidance for [parents and carers](#), and [providers](#) is helpful?

- a) Agree Strongly
- b) Agree
- c) Neutral
- d) Disagree
- e) Disagree Strongly
- f) I don't know

**Question 21**

To what extent do you agree or disagree that the explanatory safeguarding [posters](#) and [leaflet](#) are helpful?

- a) Agree Strongly
- b) Agree
- c) Neutral
- d) Disagree
- e) Disagree Strongly
- f) I don't know

**Question 22**

Which, if any, of the following do you think could improve the guidance and resources for providers/parents and carers?

- a) More detail (such as explanations of referenced legislation)
- b) Less detail (such as shorter summaries)
- c) More case studies
- d) Simpler language
- e) Simpler presentation (such as more tables, checklist and templates)
- f) I don't think the guidance and resources need any improvement
- g) I don't know
- h) Other – free text

## Questions about sharing information on safeguarding in OOSS

### Question 23

What, if anything, do you think prevents parents and carers from easily accessing safeguarding information (such as a safeguarding policy or process) for OOSS?

(Please select all that apply)

- a) Parents/carers are unaware that they should check for safeguarding measures in OOSS
- b) Parents/carers know they should check but are unsure what specific measures to look for
- c) Parents/carers know to check, but don't know what good safeguarding measures look like.
- d) Parents/carers know to check, but don't feel comfortable raising it with the OOSS
- e) Providers don't display safeguarding information prominently and clearly
- f) I disagree, parents/carers find it easy to find relevant safeguarding information
- g) Other
- h) I don't know.

### Question 24

Based on your experience of the primary OOSS you are responding in relation to [see Questions about you Q8], which, if any, of the following does the setting share with parents and carers?

- a) Their safeguarding arrangements displayed on their website/on location.
- b) Their health & safety arrangements displayed on their website/on-location
- c) Their complaints policy
- d) Details of their membership of the Ofsted Early Years, Childcare or Voluntary Childcare Registers and information about any inspections.
- e) Details of their membership of an accreditation scheme or membership body
- f) Details for their designated safeguarding lead
- g) Information about what checks have been carried out on staff and volunteers
- h) None of the above
- i) Other – free text
- j) I don't know

### Question 25

Based on your experience, how do you think OOSS **should** inform parents and

carers of safeguarding arrangements in their setting?

- a) Discuss safeguarding arrangements with parents/carers when their child joins the setting
- b) Provide printed information on joining
- c) Direct to online safeguarding information on joining
- d) Prominently display printed information in the setting (such as posters and leaflets)
- e) Prominently display information through their website or social media channel(s)
- f) Regularly provide sessions to discuss safeguarding information without prompting
- g) Provide printed information on request
- h) Provide information through their website or social media page on request
- i) Discuss safeguarding arrangements on request
- j) None of the above
- k) I don't know
- l) Other – free text

## Questions about accreditation schemes

### Question 26

Thinking about the primary OOSS you are responding in relation to, are they members or affiliates of any of the following accreditation schemes or membership bodies?

- a) Ofsted Early Years Register
- b) Ofsted General Childcare Register (compulsory part)
- c) Ofsted General Childcare Register (voluntary part)
- d) Tutors Association membership
- e) Quest Scheme (Sport England-recommended)
- f) Accredited sports body (such as Football Association Charter Standard, England and Wales Cricket Board Clubmark, England Hockey Clubmark)
- g) Youth United Foundation network
- h) Council for Dance, Drama and Musical Theatre
- i) British Council / Accreditation UK
- j) Institute for Outdoor Learning
- k) Learning Outside the Classroom quality badge
- l) Strengthening Faith Institutions
- m) Another accreditation organisation or membership scheme – free text
- n) I don't know
- o) None of the above



**Question 27**

Why do you think that the OOSS is not a member or affiliate of an accreditation or registration scheme?

- a) It costs too much
- b) It requires too much administrative work
- c) There isn't an appropriate scheme/group for this type of OOSS
- d) The OOSS is not eligible to join (for instance, they don't offer provision for enough hours)
- e) The OOSS do not feel membership/affiliation is useful for them
- f) I don't know
- g) Other - free text

## Section 4 - Safety in educational settings

4.1. The Government also provides guidance and advice to all education settings, including OOSS, about how to keep the premises children attend and people in them safe.

- Prevent - the Government has provided [guidance](#) and [further information](#) on safeguarding children vulnerable to radicalisation. This should help prevent children being exposed to extremist narratives and from being drawn into terrorism.
- Protect and Prepare - the Government has also provided [guidance](#) and e-learning [resources](#) to help education settings embed protective practices and preparedness, making premises more secure from any hostile actors.
  - Whilst OOSS are not legally required to comply with the measures above, we strongly recommend they do so.
  - However, the Government is working on further legislation, The Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Bill known as [Martyn's Law](#), to improve security and preparedness. This will require **everyone** responsible for public venues and events (including OOSS), to consider the threat from terrorism and take appropriate mitigation measures.

### Questions about your awareness and understanding of safety in Out-of-School Settings

The questions below will help Government understand respondents' views and experiences, regarding current practices, communication, priorities and engagement regarding safety in Out-of-School Settings.

#### Question 28

Does the OOSS you are responding in relation to have any of the following security measures or training in place, as part of an incident response plan?

- a) A pre-planned incident response option such as lockdown, invacuation, evacuation or other plans
- b) A designated security / incident lead
- c) An emergency communication system with staff/volunteers
- d) An emergency grab kit (walkie talkies/an emergency phone, a list of key contacts, site plans, public access trauma first aid kit)
- e) A threat checklist, summarising actions to report the threat as a crime
- f) Government e-learning training (such as ACT for Education)

- g) Non-government training (such as Protect UK/SCAN, ACT in a BOX)
- h) None of the above
- i) Don't know

**Question 29**

Does this OOSS currently have a process for referring children, vulnerable to radicalisation and/or extremism, for further support from the local authority?

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) Don't know

**Question 30**

Have you accessed training on safeguarding children from radicalisation and/or extremism in this OOSS?

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) Don't know
- d) N/A

**Question 31**

Do you have any other concerns or have identified any gaps in the support or guidance, with regards to keeping the people and setting safe and secure?  
[free text]

## **Section 5 - Information about potential Out-of-School Setting safeguarding reform and policy development**

- 5.1. The questions above help clarify current practice in OOSS. It would also be helpful to understand the public's initial thoughts and preferences, as to how the Government could approach developing any solution.
- 5.2. It is important to ensure that any solution avoids unduly burdening providers. Therefore, we must understand the most significant considerations across different types of setting. Any of the approaches below should consider how to mitigate risks effectively, for example tailoring or targeted measures to tackle dangers associated to particular activities or settings.
- 5.3. Any proposal would require extensive development and may be subject to a further consultation. To prepare for this call for evidence, the DfE sought input from safeguarding stakeholders, to understand the potential approaches available. Some of these different approaches, and associated practical options, are set out below alongside further questions.

### **Do nothing**

- 5.4. One approach is for the government to take no action, and maintain the current position which is that parents take the decision on whether an OOSS is safe for their child and OOSS make the decisions on what safety measures are appropriate. Under this option, no new measures, regulations, or expectations would be introduced regarding safeguarding in OOSS.
- 5.5. This option has the benefit of empowering OOSS to make decisions that are proportionate for their setting, recognising that all settings are unique, and makes parents responsible for deciding whether a given setting is the right choice for their child. It avoids placing further burdens on the sector which arguably might allow the sector to grow, and it also places no costs on government or providers. However, it potentially leaves some risks unaddressed.

### **Registration**

- 5.6. A form of interventionist approach would mean the Government proactively taking measures to promote safeguarding standards for OOSS, and act where these are not in place. This would likely require, or strongly encourage, the registration, and potentially also regulation, of some or all OOSS.

- 5.7. **Registration** with a government, local authority or public sector body would help to gather information about settings - both to aid in responsive safeguarding action and potentially to assist any future reform proposals.
- Registration could mean OOSS providers sharing information such as the name and contact details of a nominated individual responsible for the provision, the location of the setting and type of activity.
  - It may involve required registration criteria, such as minimum safeguarding standards (such as DBS checks), and suspension or removal from the register if standards are not met.
- 5.8. Alongside registration there could be an accompanying oversight system, or '**regulation**<sup>14</sup>', to either enforce required minimum standards for registration, or to enforce registration itself. This could include one, or a combination, of:
- legislative changes
  - an oversight system of inspections (in person or remote)<sup>15</sup>
  - submissions of evidence
  - a reactive complaints process.
- 5.9. More stringent government inspection and intervention (whether widespread or risk-based) would likely raise sector practices towards the set minimum standards. However, registration and regulation can be burdensome and costly, for providers and ultimately parents and taxpayers. – increasingly so if more information and ongoing checks are required. This may be particularly damaging to families who rely on these settings for their children's enrichment and potentially as a form of childcare. It can also create a sense of false assurance, where the public assume that appropriate safeguarding standards are guaranteed and verified constantly at registered providers. This assumption does reflect the irregular nature of most oversight measures, like inspections, and can reduce independent checks of settings.
- 5.10. As such, it is important to consider whether any registration system would be regulated or self-declared, local or national, and mandatory or voluntary.
- Greater regulation and a mandatory system would be more effective at identifying and addressing bad actors, but would also burden all providers and could prove costly and difficult to deliver.
  - By contrast a self-audited, or voluntary system should help promote good practice amongst willing settings, without burdening smaller settings. However, it would likely be less effective at identifying bad actors who could falsify declarations or choose not to participate.

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<sup>14</sup> Regulation refers to the term commonly used to refer to the oversight system of a law.

<sup>15</sup> Parents may (incorrectly) assume that being registered, or a previous inspection report, ensures that the setting is aligned with minimum safeguarding.

- Local registration would build on existing legal duties for local authorities (LA) to keep children safe in their local area, and to provide information on childcare for parents. However, localisation would likely result in different implementations across the country, which would be complicated for providers operating across multiple LAs. It would also likely be burdensome on LA resource.
- A national scheme could operate via a centrally held register. This would create a single, standardised set of criteria and registration procedures for every setting, and a single source of information which parents could search. However, it could be inflexible and unable to adapt to local contexts, slower to immediately collect information from LAs, and could place additional pressure on central resources.

## Registration scenarios

- 5.11. National or local authority **mandatory registration with regulation** (legal duties with an oversight system) could mean:
- a central or local authority register, with all OOSS in England required to join and be subject to periodic inspections to ensure they meet required safeguarding standards. Failure to register, repeated failure to uphold registration standards, and continued operation whilst not registered could result in reputational damage, and, if needed, the prosecution of providers. Appropriate penalties could include fines and custodial sentences in the most serious cases.
  - This would likely improve safeguarding practices, but given the size, range and fluid nature of the sector, it would be very expensive, burdensome and difficult to deliver. It could mean that some smaller and voluntary-run providers close.
- 5.12. National or local authority **mandatory registration without regulation** (a legal duty with no oversight system) could mean:
- a central or local authority register, with all OOSS required to join but only required to provide basic identifying information. Providers could also be required to self-declare compliance with minimum safeguarding standards. As above, failure to register or maintain standards, and operating without registration could lead to reputational damage and prosecution. Penalties could include fines and, in severe cases, custodial sentences.
  - This could help local authorities identify settings and help with development of future safeguarding schemes. However, a more limited official registration scheme may lead some people to falsely assume minimum safeguarding standards have been ensured.
- 5.13. National or local authority **voluntary registration with regulation** (optional duties with an oversight system) could mean:

- a central or local authority register, which the Government encourages or incentivises providers to join, with periodic inspections (for instance a certain percentage inspected each year, following risk-based assessments).
- This could help to identify willing settings and improve their safeguarding standards through minimum requirements to register. However, as registration would be voluntary, there would be no consequence for failing to register. This means any settings who do not want to be known could continue to go ‘under the radar’.

## Engagement – Accreditation and Partnerships

5.14. An engagement approach would focus on improving safeguarding standards by supporting and promoting existing sector efforts, rather than any registration or regulation of settings. Government would collaborate with safeguarding partners to raise standards – such as by endorsing safeguarding expertise in the sector, and fostering partnerships between organisations with strong safeguarding expertise.

- **Government endorsement of existing accreditation<sup>16</sup> schemes and membership bodies** could help parents identify providers which meet the Government’s minimum safeguarding standards (such as our [OOSS Provider’s Code of Practice](#)) across a range of different types of provision.
- However, not all provision has an existing scheme or body, and not all existing schemes currently carry out suitable inspections or have sufficient registration requirements. Similarly, some schemes and registration bodies may choose not to engage, or providers may choose not to affiliate. This could mean inconsistent coverage and support across the OOSS sector.
- As such, whilst this approach may help highlight and encourage safer provision, it is unlikely to identify or help tackle those providers who want to stay ‘under the radar’, potentially for the wrong reasons.
- **Government could also foster partnerships**, building on existing safeguarding systems, expertise and relationships to better share safeguarding best practice. This could help improve oversight and early identification of safeguarding cases and risks. This could also be cost-effective and help improve community cohesion by growing local partnerships.

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<sup>16</sup> Accreditation should be understood in this document to refer to a formal process by which an authoritative non-state body evaluates the safeguarding standards of an OOSS, and typically will recognise their compliance with certification, or some other formal recognition, which can be shared with users.

- However, it would require capacity within schools and local authorities to manage this engagement. Schools may also have concerns around forming partnerships with OOSS, who do not have the same mandatory safeguarding standards as schools.
- Implementation may vary between schools due to differences in resources, local authority support, existing relationships with OOSS, pressure from parents and the community, and the school's leadership and safeguarding culture.

## Engagement examples

5.15. Engagement through accreditation could look like:

- Branded government approval for accreditation schemes and memberships bodies who ensure their members meet the minimum safeguarding standards outlined in the OOSS Code of Practice. A government approved checkmark, such as the England Hockey 'clubmark', would signify that an OOSS has met the required safeguarding standards.
- The government could encourage OOSS to join affiliated accredited schemes and advise parents to look for the checkmark when choosing a setting.
- This would likely require some Government framework for assessing, approving, monitoring and promoting endorsed accreditation schemes. However, both the above framework, and accreditation scheme memberships would still have costs for Government, providers and ultimately parents.

5.16. Engagement through partnerships could look like:

- Government encouraging and incentivising engagement between schools and OOSS, already often sharing the same buildings, staff and pupils. This could be through Government communications and guidance to schools and local authorities.
- Government would likely seek to learn from similar programmes, such as the Enrichment Partnerships Pilot<sup>17</sup> between schools and providers, where both groups benefit from each other's experience, expertise and advice on best practice.

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<sup>17</sup> The Enrichment Partnerships Pilot aimed to improve the enrichment offer of up to 200 secondary schools in Education Investment Areas. The Pilot identified and funded a small number of staff in local organisations, including local authorities, voluntary and community sector organisations or multi-academy trusts, to provide bespoke support to secondary schools in their respective local area.



## Further information, guidance and advice

- 5.17. A focus on improving the safeguarding in OOSS information and guidance available could be achieved through more tailored advice for parents/carers and providers, as well as through creating materials for children. Government could further consider how to proactively collaborate with safeguarding partners, to inform Government communications and input into partner's campaigns.
- 5.18. This approach would likely be less costly and burdensome than the others, whilst encouraging provider accountability due to increased awareness on the part of parents and children as to safeguarding expectations. However, without associated oversight or enforcement of promoted minimum safeguarding standards, an information-based approach alone may do little to ensure any significant improvement in safeguarding practices. It would also be difficult to ensure, or measure, engagement with the information.

## Information and guidance scenarios

- 5.19. Empowering children to better understand safeguarding in OOSS could focus on:
- Teaching children how to recognise and report abuse via public campaigns and/or resources to be used in schools. These resources could include examples of how to spot and deal with unsafe or inappropriate behaviour, with specific examples in OOSS. This would be a child-centric approach, designed to reduce abuse stigma, build on the curriculum and government/wider national campaigns, and empower children.
  - However, there could be inconsistent school implementation, cost considerations for effective communications campaigns, and some communities may feel uncomfortable with exposing children to sensitive topics.
  - It might be hard to prove the impact on children, as an increase in reporting could be caused by other factors, like more incidents happening or better training for adults making them more approachable.
- 5.20. Efforts could be made to better promote parental guidance through:
- Public campaigns and use of a range of communication methods (such as social media, email and school engagement). This could increase parental engagement and demand for best practice of safeguarding in OOSS. However, any campaign would only be effective if the guidance is user-friendly, and it could be difficult to engage parents (given common misconceptions that OOSS are already regulated) without inflaming concerns about OOSS safeguarding.
  - A digital option to try map OOSS, and allow parents to search for, review and contact settings who choose to sign up. This could be a new website/app, or endorsement of an existing website/app. It could make parental safeguarding efforts more convenient, and may be less

expensive and burdensome for providers than interventionist options. It could encourage parental engagement and subsequently drive greater OOSS provider engagement. However, there would be a risk of providing false assurance without robust compliance checks before OOSS are added to the website/app. It may also duplicate existing tools, so parents may be unlikely to use it, and it may be expensive to maintain. It could give a false sense of assurance as the safety of the settings on the website as they would not be subject to an inspection or assurance process.

## Questions about Potential Approaches to Out-of-School Settings Safeguarding Reform

### Question 32

If the government were to take a registration and/or regulation approach, which of the following would you most like to see introduced?

- a) National mandatory registration with regulation
- b) National mandatory registration without regulation
- c) National voluntary registration with regulation
- d) Local mandatory registration with regulation
- e) Local mandatory registration without regulation
- f) Local voluntary registration with regulation
- g) Another form of intervention (free text box)
- h) None of the above

### Question 33

Do you have any additional comments or suggestions with the registration and/or regulation policy approach to safeguarding reform in OOSS?

[free text]

### Question 34

If the government were to take an engagement-based approach, which of the following would you most like to see introduced?

- a) Government support for existing accreditation or registration scheme/s (relevant sector organisations oversee safeguarding standards amongst members)
- b) Further collaboration with safeguarding partners on communication campaigns and sector specific guidance
- c) Government support to foster community partnerships and safeguarding expertise sharing (such as School-OOSS engagement)
- d) Another form of engagement (free text box)
- e) None of the above

### Question 35

Do you have any additional comments or suggestions concerning the engagement-based approach to safeguarding reform in OOSS?

[free text]

### Question 36

If the government were to take an information-based approach, which of the following would you most like to see introduced?

- a) Empowering children to understand safeguarding in OOSS (by developing resources for use in school or public campaigns)
- b) Improving existing guidance (promoting guidance to parents and making it easier to read)

- c) Improving access to information through a digital solution like a website or app (a directory of OOSS with user-generated safeguarding information and review system)
- d) Another form of information (free text box)
- e) None of the above

### **Question 37**

Do you have any additional comments or suggestions concerning the information-based approach to safeguarding reform in OOSS?

### **Question 38**

Of the following, which would be your preferred option for how Government should help to improve safeguarding in OOSS?

- a) A registration and/or regulation-based approach
- b) An accreditation and partnerships-based approach
- c) An Information-based approach (such as improved guidance and advice for providers, parents and children)
- d) Other (free text box)
- e) None - I don't think it is necessary for government to make further efforts to improve safeguarding in OOSS
- f) I don't know

### **Question 39**

Currently, parents are responsible for the decision on whether a setting is safe for their child. Instead, do you think another body should have a role in setting and/or monitoring safeguarding measures, bearing in mind that this would have burden implications?

- a) Yes – Central government
- b) Yes – Local government
- c) Yes – Independent body
- d) No – Happy with the current position, but think parents should be made more aware of it
- e) No – Happy with current position in general

### **Question 40**

Considering the wide range of OOSS, all with their own unique considerations, are there any type of settings that you think should be focussed on as part of any future safeguarding reforms?

- a) Charity or other voluntary organisation
- b) Childcare Provision
- c) Creative, performing arts and hobby-based (such as music, arts, dance, craft, and drama)
- d) Faith-based (such as madrassahs, cheders, or church groups)
- e) Supplementary education/schools
- f) Other activity provider (holiday camps, residential centre and outdoor

education centres)

- g) Sports-based (such as a football club)
- h) Supplementary Language, Culture or Heritage Schools
- i) Tutor-groups, tuition companies, and other study groups
- j) Youth centre, club or group
- k) Uniformed youth organisation (such as the Scouts or Girl Guiding)
- l) Other – free text
- m) No – I do not think types of OOSS should be prioritised and any approach needs to be sector wide

**Question 41**

Why? What evidence has informed your answer to the above question?



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