Subject: MANAGING INFORMATION ON PERSONS WHO POSE A RISK TO PUPILS

Target Audience:
- Principals and Boards of Governors of all grant-aided schools
- Education and Library Boards
- Council for Catholic Maintained Schools
- Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education
- Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta
- Governing Bodies Association
- Independent Schools
- Pre-school providers
- Youth Council for Northern Ireland

Summary of Contents:
This Circular provides guidance for schools on managing information about persons who may pose a risk to pupils.

Enquiries:
Any enquiries about the contents of this Circular should be addressed to:

Pupil Support Team
Department of Education
Rathgael House
Balloo Road
Rathgael
BANGOR BT19 7PR

Governor Awareness: Essential

Status of Contents: Advice
Guidance for Schools

Related Documents: None

Superseded Documents: None

Expiry Date: N/A

DENI Website: http://www.deni.gov.uk

Tel: 028 9127 9842
Fax: 028 9127 9100
PURPOSE OF GUIDANCE

1. This Circular provides guidance for schools' staff on how to deal with information about a person in the neighbourhood of the school who may pose a risk to pupils. The guidance is intended to ensure that such information is managed appropriately and that a school's response maintains a proper balance between pupil safety and the public protection arrangements.

2. Whilst this circular has been drafted with particular emphasis on schools, the principles apply equally well to pre-school and youth settings who are registered with ELBs. ELBs will therefore wish to consider how to adapt the processes outlined in this circular to those settings. The Youth Council for Northern Ireland should also copy this circular to youth sector headquarter organisations for information.

PUBLIC PROTECTION ARRANGEMENTS NORTHERN IRELAND

3. There are established arrangements, involving key statutory agencies such as PSNI, Probation Board for Northern Ireland (PBNI), Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS) and the Health and Social Care Trusts, to protect the public from persons convicted of sexual and violent offences. These multi-agency arrangements are known as the Public Protection Arrangements Northern Ireland, more commonly referred to as the PPANI. The PPANI have a legislative basis which allows agencies to work together and share information so that the public can be protected in a coordinated manner.

4. The PPANI cover both the assessment of the risk posed by a person and the agreed multi-agency plan to manage the assessed risk.

5. Whenever a person comes within the PPANI, the category of risk posed is determined at a multi-agency meeting known as a Local Area Public Protection Panel. The core membership of a Panel is drawn from the PSNI, PBNI and the Health and Social Care Trust. The Panel also prepares and agrees the risk management plan. Further information about the PPANI and the system used to classify the risk posed by a person is provided at Annex A.

6. Those persons who are subject to PPANI have a Designated Risk Manager who oversees the implementation of the Risk Management Plan agreed by the Panel. The Designated Risk Manager is determined at the meeting and will be either an officer from PSNI, PBNI or in a small number of cases Trust personnel.

DEALING WITH INFORMATION

7. Schools have a legal duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of all their pupils. While this duty requires a school to respond to information about a potential risk to pupils, any response must also include that part of the duty which promotes keeping safe messages to pupils and their parents.

Official Information
8. Agencies involved in PPANI are required to maintain confidentiality about individuals being managed within the arrangements unless the need to protect the public or a specific individual from harm is judged to be of overriding importance. Information is shared between statutory agencies and with schools and the wider community so that a necessary and coordinated response can be put in place to manage a person who poses a risk in the community.

9. When it is judged necessary, information about a person who poses a risk to pupils will be shared with a school principal. This will be done so that the school can take effective action to protect pupils. Agencies involved in the Public Protection Arrangements have signed up to a corporate agreement regarding information sharing and confidentiality. Authority to disclose personal and confidential information on an offender managed under the Public Protection Arrangements can only be given following application to the Assistant Chief Constable, Service Improvement Department. The decision regarding approval of disclosure will be made on basis of clear justification.

10. Following approval from the Assistant Chief Constable, Service Improvement Department, concerning an application for authority to disclose personal/confidential information regarding an offender, the school principal will be contacted by the relevant Designated Risk Manager and an officer from the local PSNI Public Protection Unit (when the risk is being managed by another agency). The discussion at the time of the contact will include the nature of the risk posed, how this information should be made public and to whom. The detail of this discussion must be recorded, including the contact details of the Designated Risk Manager and the advice given on how to manage the situation.

11. Information should not be shared with other schools. It is the responsibility of the Designated Risk Manager to make contact with other schools as necessary.

12. The advice given should be followed. Principals can seek support with any necessary actions from the local Education and Library Board’s Child Protection Support Service for Schools and from the local PSNI, Public Protection Unit.

Information from other sources

13. A school can be given information about persons who may pose a risk by victims, witnesses, parents, carers and/or members of the public or in an anonymous way. This information should be treated as legitimate.

14. When a school receives such information, from whatever source, the first step is to establish the facts. The principal must immediately share the information in full with the local Public Protection Unit and seek advice on how to proceed. The information and advice received must be recorded.

15. The advice given should be followed. Support with any necessary action is available from the local Education and Library Board’s Child Protection Support Service for Schools and from the local PSNI, Public Protection Unit.

16. A ‘Step by Step Guide’ to managing information is provided at Annex B and an Action Checklist at Annex C.
INFORMING PUPILS, STAFF, PARENTS / CARERS

17. While it is understandable that the main concern of a school is to ensure that pupils, staff, parents and carers have sufficient information to ensure pupils’ safety, no personal information about any individual should ever be made public. Only information intended to raise awareness of possible risks to pupils, and which has previously been agreed with the Designated Risk Manager and the local Public Protection Unit should be released.

18. Schools should also ensure that any information given to pupils is age appropriate in content and reinforces keeping safe messages.

MEDIA OR PRESS ENQUIRIES

19. Schools must not discuss individual cases with the media. All requests from the press or media should be directed to the local Education and Library Board who may liaise with the PPANI Coordination Unit or to the Press Officers of PSNI.

HEATHER MAILEY
Acting Head of Pupil Support Team
PUBLIC PROTECTION ARRANGEMENTS NORTHERN IRELAND (PPANI): MANAGEMENT OF RISK

The public protection arrangements aim to provide a multi-agency, coordinated system of risk assessment and risk management that will be effective in reducing the immediate and long term risk of sexual re-offending.

The risk posed by a person who has been convicted of a sexual offence is assessed by the Local Area Public Protection Panel. Only persons assessed as a Category 2 or Category 3 Risk come within the PPANI and the risk they pose is managed on a multi-agency basis. The PPANI risk management plan is overseen by a Designated Risk Manager.

The descriptions of the risk categories detailed below can be found on the PPANI website: www.publicprotectionni.com

Risk - Category 1

(No requirement for multi-agency intervention)

“Someone whose previous offending, and/or current behaviour and/or current circumstances present little evidence that they could cause serious harm through carrying out a contact sexual or violent offence.”

Persons assessed as Category 1 will be managed by a single agency, for example, PBNI.

Risk - Category 2

(Requirement for local multi-agency intervention)

“Someone whose previous offending, and/or current behaviour and/or current circumstances present clear and identifiable evidence that they could cause serious harm through carrying out a contact sexual or violent offence.”

The person will be managed by a Designated Risk Manager from the PSNI or PBNI in line with an agreed multi-agency plan.

Category 3

(Requirement for intense/focused multi-agency intervention)

“Someone whose previous offending and/or current behaviour and/or current circumstances present clear and identifiable evidence that they are highly likely to cause serious harm through carrying out a contact sexual offence.”

The person will be managed by a Designated Risk Manager from the co-located multi-agency Public Protection Team in line with an agreed multi-agency plan and be subject to intense and focused multi-agency intervention.
FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information about the PPANI can be found at www.publicprotectionni.com
**MANAGING INFORMATION: STEP BY STEP GUIDE**

**Official Source**
Principal receives information from the Designated Risk Manager and/or an officer from the local Public Protection Unit about a person who may pose a risk to pupils

**Other Information**
Principal receives information from a known or anonymous source about a person who may pose a risk to pupils

- Principal records all details, including date, time, location and individual(s) involved, where known. Where possible, the source should be told that the information will be passed on and confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.

- Principal should contact the local Public Protection Unit to clarify the information received and request advice on how to proceed

- Principal makes a signed and dated record of all relevant information received, the advice given and the name and contact details of the officer(s) involved

- Principal informs Designated Teacher/Deputy Designated Teacher for Child Protection and Chair of Board of Governors. The date the information is shared should be recorded.

- Principal records all action taken by the school. The content of any announcement to pupils and/or staff or letter to parents should be agreed with the Designated Risk Manager and/or local Public Protection Unit

- Details of all information and advice given and action taken should be retained in a confidential file and stored within the school’s child protection records in accordance with DE guidance.
## MANAGING INFORMATION: CHECKLIST

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Official Information</th>
<th>Unofficial Information</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do seek the name of the source of information</td>
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<td>Do record the detail of the information being shared including time and date</td>
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<td>Do ask the source how to proceed in acting on the formal information and record this. Clarify: What are the risks? Do parents need to be informed? Do pupils need safeguarding advice? Does all staff need to be informed? How can the school be supported in managing the information on a planned basis? What are the arrangements for managing the media?</td>
<td>Do clarify: Where did the information come from? When was the information disclosed to the source? How accurate is the information? Who else knows the information? Has the source disclosed the information to anybody else?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do tell the known source that you will be acting on the information and confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. Do act immediately by contacting the PSNI and pass on the information. Do ask how to proceed in acting on this informal information and record the advice given.</td>
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**DO NOT**

- Do not act in isolation.
- Do not share information outside of the agreed advice from the Designated Risk Manager.
- Do not ignore information about people who may pose a risk.
USEFUL CONTACTS

PSNI

Central Exchange: 028 90650222

Public Protection Unit (PPU): 0845 6008000 and ask for the PPU in your area

PBNI

Headquarters 028 90262400

Child Protection Support Service for Schools (CPSSS)

Belfast Education and Library Board 028 90564289
North Eastern Education and Library Board 028 94482223
South Eastern Education and Library Board 028 90566434
Southern Education and Library Board 028 38341975
Western Education and Library Board 028 82411289

Education and Library Board Press Officers

Belfast Education and Library Board 028 90564000
North Eastern Education and Library Board 028 25653333
South Eastern Education and Library Board 028 90566200
Southern Education and Library Board 028 37512200
Western Education and Library Board 028 82411411