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A collaborative approach to tackling equality and diversity through the use of targeted safeguarding responses: Kirklees Council

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Brief description

Kirklees council has published guidance: 'Safeguarding Children - Guidance for Madressahs and Supplementary Schools', a working document produced in both Urdu and English. It contains the latest legislation and practical advice and information to help faith and community organisations in their safeguarding role. It promotes effective behaviour management; provides guidance for the protection of children and young people; and discusses methods to ensure the health and safety of staff and pupils.

Overview – the provider's message

'Children and young people have a fundamental right to be protected from harm. Parents have a right to expect that organisations to which they entrust their children are diligent in making sure that all their activities are carried out in a safe and secure environment.

As we observe new and emerging management committees which are promoting open and inclusive approaches, it is imperative that local authorities and local safeguarding children boards continue to provide guidance and support to staff and volunteers in madressahs and supplementary schools. This will enable effective and transparent governance, improved links with public sector organisations, better awareness of health and safety issues, stimulating teaching and learning in the classrooms, and an enjoyable safe experience for children and young people.'



Shakeel Hafez

The good practice in detail

The population of Kirklees is diverse; 16% of residents are from non-White groups and 24% of under 16s are from non-White groups. Supporting the development of communities where people are at ease with themselves and their neighbours and where diversity is respected and celebrated is central to the [council's](#) work.

A madressah is an Islamic supplementary school, set-up to deliver elementary Islamic education to preserve the religious, cultural and linguistic identities of children aged from five to 15. Madressahs operate daily between 4.30pm and 7.30pm in addition to the normal school day and in some cases at weekends. With 60 madressahs and supplementary schools in Kirklees and about 10,000 children in their care, this is a growth sector due to the younger population profile of some communities.

The council and its partners recognise that the madressahs and supplementary schools sector, established and funded voluntarily by the ethnic minority communities, must be sufficiently engaged and adequately supported. So, following discussions with community representatives on improving child welfare awareness and promoting positive parenting, the council set up the 'Madressahs and Supplementary Schools Project'. Most faith and community organisations in Kirklees have supported this work and many madressahs and supplementary schools have implemented child protection and health and safety policies as a result. Many of the teachers and volunteers in madressahs and supplementary schools are recent arrivals to the UK and some are unable to communicate in English. A significant number of staff and volunteers have attended child protection and behaviour management training. This has helped to inform the views of those who work with children to ensure that they know the law and understand their duties and responsibilities for safeguarding the children in their care. The widespread use of the guidance has helped to ensure that children learn in an enjoyable and safe environment. While promoting the rights of the child and good safeguarding childcare practice, the guidance challenges the attitudes of those who consider physical punishment of children as a legitimate price to pay for religious and cultural education. The guidance has also been used effectively to develop meaningful links between the multi-faith communities and partnerships with mainstream public sector organisations, including schools and health and social care agencies, leading to reduced inequality and more effective community cohesion.

What has been done?

The guidance document was produced after extensive community consultation and subsequently reviewed in 2010. It is widely used by teachers and volunteers in faith and community organisations. The project has also provided child protection and behaviour management training sessions for staff and volunteers and has ensured the widespread use of Criminal Records Bureau checks for all staff who work with children. In addition it has improved knowledge about the role and function of the Local Authority Designated Officer by those who operate madressahs and supplementary schools through awareness training covering the management of allegations against staff who work with children. The project also produced a '[Positive Parenting](#)' leaflet which discusses how positive parenting encourages better behaviour and why smacking is harmful to children. This has been widely disseminated and take-up by parents is good.

Why was the project successful?

Children's safeguarding has been prioritised and resources have been appropriately targeted to tackle equality and diversity across the diverse communities of Kirklees. It was acknowledged from the outset that not all faith and community organisations operate at the

same level. They are independent, many do not have a hierarchical structure and are at different stages of readiness to take on external views about the way they should operate or develop.

Shakeel Hafez explains: 'Many of the madressahs and supplementary schools have become more open and approachable over the years while others have tended to keep a low profile and have been inclined to keep professionals at arms length. They are reserved in their engagement because they are sceptical of local authority motivations and some fear they will losing their independence. Kirklees Council has recognised the need to engage faith and community organisations in order to achieve better safeguarding outcomes. The communities have appreciated these efforts and have responded in a spirit of goodwill and partnership'.

The Safeguarding and Community Engagement Manager has developed good relationships with the faith and community organisations which have effectively promoted safeguarding children. Child protection discussions are conducted openly, sensitively and effectively, including in community languages. Radio Ramadhan, local community newspapers, the Kirklees website and internal newsletters have all been used to promote the work effectively across the communities of Kirklees and to raise public and media awareness of safeguarding children.

What difference has it made?

The work has made a significant contribution to the safety and protection of the 10,000 children who use and benefit from this additional education. This is evident from the large public response, positive responses from madressahs and supplementary schools, and the project portfolio which includes council and community representatives. Madressahs and supplementary schools continue to formulate child protection policies and procedures. A number of local authorities and local safeguarding children boards have emulated the model. The 'Positive Parenting' leaflet is 'highly commended' by the Association of Social Care Communicators and the project has won the prestigious [Community Care](#) Award. The judges commented that it is: '...a very positive and practical example of work with the community and teachers to protect children and promote positive parenting.'

Other leading childcare commentators have responded positively as follows:

'The new safeguarding children guide is a much-needed tool which will save many children from abuse and help to guide the communities and mosques in understanding and preventing abuse.' District Judge Marilyn Mornington

'This booklet represents one of the first serious attempts to provide guidelines to mosques and their staff on the modern-day running of madressahs. This beautiful, colourful booklet is well-presented...It is very user friendly...' Shaykh Ibrahim Mogra, Muslim Council of Britain

'Safeguarding Children covers essential information for parents, community, faith groups and supplementary schools. It is a useful kit to promote the welfare of children.' Wesley Wu, ContinYou

Provider background

Kirklees is a metropolitan borough in West Yorkshire. It has a population of around 400,000 and includes Batley, Birstall, Cleckheaton, Denby Dale, Dewsbury, Heckmondwike, Holmfirth, Huddersfield, Kirkburton, Marsden, Meltham, Mirfield and Slaithwaite. Huddersfield is the largest town in the district, and the centre of administration.

Are you thinking of putting these ideas into practice; or already doing something similar that could help other providers; or just interested? We'd welcome your views and ideas. Get in touch [here](#).

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