

Briefing paper

Out-of-School Settings (OOSS) Safeguarding: Call for Evidence

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Summary

Over half of children in England attend some sort of Out-of-School setting (OOSS).ⁱ These are defined as 'organisations or individuals who provide community activities, tuition or after-school clubs for children'.ⁱⁱ

The Department for Education (DfE) is running a [Call for Evidence](#) to shape future safeguarding policy in these settings to increase safety. The Call for Evidence references three key potential approaches the Government is considering: A registration and/or regulation-based approach; An accreditation and partnerships-based approach; and an information-based approach (such as improved guidance and advice for providers, parents and children).

We strongly recommend reading this Briefing Paper and the [supporting document](#) before completing the Call for Evidence which runs until the **21 August 2025**.

What activities are defined as Out-of-School Settings?

Out-of-School settings include:

- Religious settings (e.g. Church-based Sunday schools, Jewish yeshivas and chedarim, youth groups, supplementary schools, cultural classes, Muslim madrassahs).
- Community activities (such as children's and youth clubs).
- Before-school and after-school clubs.
- Holiday clubs.
- Private tuition and exam preparation classes.
- Music tuition and lessons.
- Sports clubs and training.
- Uniformed groups (e.g. Scouts and Girl Guides).
- Private language schools.

The [Out-of-School Settings: Safeguarding Guidance for providers \(2023\)](#) is non-statutory guidance in place to promote safeguarding in Out-of-School Settings.

Non-statutory guidance is not governed by law or legislation but exists as best practice guidelines. Current guidance includes information about the policies and procedures that should be in place in Out-of-School Settings such as Safeguarding and Child Protection, Health and Safety, Safer Recruitment and Governance.

Approaches being considered:

- **A registration and/or regulation-based approach.**
- **An accreditation and partnerships-based approach.**
- **An information-based approach (such as improved guidance and advice for providers, parents and children).**

Key considerations for the Call for evidence:

► A registration and regulation-based approach

This approach would mean that all Out-of-School settings would be required to register with a government, local authority or public sector body.

The Department for Education have suggested that this could be to share their name and contact details of the person responsible for the provision, the location of the setting and type of activity.

Alternatively, it could mean a mandatory registration criterion with minimum safeguarding standards such as DBS checks and/or training, with the consequence of removal from the register if set standards are not met.

Mandatory registration

Making registration mandatory would mean that all Out-of-School settings would have to register their setting with either the Government, local authority or public sector body.

Considerations:

The goal of Mandatory registration would be to identify all settings across the sector, including those not safeguarding children and young people. In practice this may be a challenge due to the range and complexity of Out-of-School settings across the sector. There is limited information on what support would be available for paid staff and volunteers to manage this new system of registration.

Voluntary registration

Voluntary registration would mean that the Out-of-School settings would have a choice to opt in to register their setting with either the Government, local authority or public sector body.

Considerations:

This approach would promote good practice among willing settings but may miss many settings who are not currently engaging with safeguarding best practice. There is limited information on what support would be available for paid staff and volunteers to manage this new system of registration.

Local registration

Local registration would give the responsibility to Local Authorities to keep children in their local area safe and to provide information on settings for parents.

Considerations:

Local registration could result in different implementations of registration and safeguarding support across England and would be complicated for providers operating across multiple Local Authorities, but Local Authorities would understand their local contexts and the complexities that exist.

National registration

National registration would be operated centrally, and the Department for Education has suggested that this would be through a centrally held register.

Considerations:

National registration would create a single set of data about all Out-of-School settings in England with a consistent process for all settings to register, making it easier for parents to access and search. But this approach would not consider local nuances as the expectation would be consistent across the board, and could be very time-consuming for groups to administer

Regulation

Regulation would mean that an accompanying oversight system for regulation could be introduced to ensure required minimum standards, or to enforce registration itself. The Department for Education are proposing that regulation could include one, or a combination of: legislative changes, an oversight system of

inspections (in person or remote), submissions of evidence and/or a reactive complaints process.

Considerations:

Currently Out-of-School settings (including many faith settings) are not subject to any mandatory regulation, meaning they are not obligated to sign-up to a central register, do not have to be members of an overarching umbrella organisation, are not required to have inspections, engage with the local authority or have compulsory training. Were this to be introduced, it may bring faith settings in line with comparable settings in other sectors.

► **An accreditation and partnerships-based approach**

This approach would promote working with accreditation bodies to undertake formal processes to evaluate the safeguarding standards of an Out-of-School setting and identify compliance with some recognition that can be shared with children and families.

The Government have suggested that they would endorse existing accreditation schemes and membership bodies to do this work.

Considerations:

An accreditation and partnership-based approach would allow parents/carers to identify providers that meet minimum safeguarding standards set by the Government through a form of recognised 'kitemark' scheme. Not all sectors have existing schemes or bodies, and consistency of practice could be an issue.

► **An Information-based approach**

An information-based approach would focus on improving the information and guidance available to Out-of-School settings by tailoring advice to parents/carers and providers and creating materials for children.

Considerations:

This approach emphasises empowering children, parents and carers to understand the

importance of safeguarding in Out-of-School settings. This could put the responsibility on children, parents and carers to ensure that safeguarding is upheld, and lacks the setting and enforcement of minimum safeguarding standards.

Conclusion

The Out-of-School Settings Safeguarding Guidance directly recommends a common approach to safeguarding standards in these settings. This is an opportunity to create a level playing field for safeguarding in Out-of-School settings.

When responding to this Call for Evidence, it is important to consider the proposed approaches and how they might be applied to your specific contexts.

It is important that the Department of Education (DfE) are given evidence and information so they have a full understanding of the needs of faith communities, the different approaches to delivering work with children and young people in Out-of-School settings, and any impact the implementation of these approaches may have.

Any queries or for further information about this briefing email Katy Jackson on policy@thirtyoneeight.org

This briefing paper has been produced by Thirtyone:eight with support from Churches Together in England and UK Christian Youth Work Consortium.

References

ⁱ [gov.uk/Parent_pupil and learner panel 22/23 April/May wave](https://www.gov.uk/Parent_pupil_and_learner_panel_22/23/April/May_wave)

ⁱⁱ [gov.uk/keeping-children-safe-in-out-of-school settings-code-of-practice](https://www.gov.uk/keeping-children-safe-in-out-of-school-settings-code-of-practice)

Complete the Call for Evidence here:

<https://consult.education.gov.uk/out-of-school-settings-safeguarding-team/out-of-school-settings-safeguarding-call-for-evide/>