



Sandwell Safeguarding Children Board

Safeguarding Children in Places of Worship and Supplementary School Safeguarding Good Practice Guide

Madrasah Edition

Childcare in an Islamic Context

The 2005 publication by UNICEF and the Al-Azhar Islamic Center for Population Studies and Research *Children in Islam, Their Care, Development and Protection* highlights how Shariah (Islamic law) stresses the need to secure a wholesome psychological environment for children. This enables them to develop by learning about the world and everything around them.

Islam acknowledges the caring role of society and the state to support families who are not able to provide appropriate care for their children. It also affirms a child's right to:

- Sound health and life
- A family, siblings, name, property and inheritance
- Healthcare and proper nutrition and food
- Education and the acquisition of talents
- Live in security and peace, and enjoy human dignity and protection under the responsibility of parents and carers

Child protection is everyone's business. All children have the right to feel safe and secure in any environment - at home, in the community or in a Madrasah. Good practice minimises the potential for abuse and increases safety for children. Madrasah must therefore develop comprehensive policies, procedures and practices to safeguard children in their care. People who work with children on a regular basis in Madrasah and other community organisations can play an important role in identifying children at risk of neglect or abuse.



Good Practice Standards for Madrasah

All Madrasah should:

- Have a written Child Protection Policy Statement showing commitments
- Identify a designated child protection member, who is trained and supported and have a Code of Conduct for all staff
- Hold parents' evenings
- Talk to young people and encourage their involvement and participation
- Observe Health and Safety Regulations through risk assessments and written, safe working practices
- Train someone in First Aid and have a fully stocked First Aid box, which is checked and restocked regularly
- Have an accident/incident reporting procedure
- Have an attendance register for every teacher
- Arrange regular staff meetings to discuss issues of concerns and update everyone on new developments
- Encourage Trustees or Management Committee members to visit Madrasah classes unannounced
- Make sure everyone involved in the Masjid and Madrasah actively promotes a culture of openness, where everyone (including children) feels free to share his or her views and concerns.



Safe behaviour when working with children in the Madrasah

Do

- Treat everyone with respect
- Provide an example you want others to follow
- Encourage young people and adults to feel comfortable and caring enough to point out attitudes or behavior they do not like
- Remember that someone else might misinterpret your actions, no matter how well-intentioned
- Avoid situations that compromise your relationship with young people and are unacceptable with a relationship of trust
- Respect a young person's right to personal privacy, protection and safe environment
- Provide access and space for young people to talk about concerns they may have
- Listen to young people
- Promote opportunities to promote good citizenship



Do NOT

- Permit abusive peer activities (for example, ridiculing, bullying, name calling)
- Have any inappropriate physical contact with young people
- Show favoritism to any individual
- Rely on your good name to protect you
- Let suspicion, disclosure or allegations of abuse, go unrecorded or unreported
- Jump to conclusions about others without checking facts
- Believe 'it could never happen to me'



Managing children's behaviour in Madrasah – nine useful tips

1. Be Consistent

Whatever you decide, try to stick to it within reason. Children have a strong sense of fairness, so it is important they see and experience consistency. They need to know the limits and what is expected of them.

2. Be Flexible

Although consistency is important, you should also be willing to make exceptions when necessary.

3. Give Explanations

Always tell children why their behaviour is unacceptable. It is inappropriate to talk down to children, or dismiss their feelings. Saying "Because I say so" is not a logical explanation or helpful explanation to give to a child.

4. Offer Alternatives

Children do get bored, and like alternatives to be offered.

5. Avoid Confrontation

Most children when challenged will mirror this response by challenging the adults back, which can escalate the situation.

6. Act Quickly

When a child is behaving in a way, which may have serious consequences for himself/herself/others, the quickest and most effective action you can take is to remove them from the situation. Above all stay calm and in control – don't argue – don't debate – don't over react.

7. Praise Good Behaviour

Children need feedback about their behaviour and achievements. Promoting positive behaviour starts here.



8. Be Sympathetic

If a child is constantly difficult to handle, stop to consider why. Be sympathetic to their background. There could be many other reasons why the child is behaving in this way.

9. Follow Through

Be realistic in determining the boundaries and sanctions and follow it through. Do not just keep threatening them.



Policies, Procedures and Guidance

Policy Statement

The Madrasah's Child Protection Policy Statement should be simple and underpinned by the following principles

- A commitment to practice, which protects children from harm.
- Operation of a no smacking policy and not tolerating any physical chastisement.
- Not tolerating bullying between children and between staff and children.
- Staff and volunteers recognising and accepting their responsibilities to develop awareness of the issues that cause children harm.

Procedures

Madrasah should:

- Have child protection guidelines and a code of behaviour for staff and volunteers
- Have arrangements to share information about child protection policies, procedures and good practice with children, parents, staff and volunteers
- Have arrangements to share information about concerns with agencies who need to know, and involving parents and children appropriately



- Following procedures for recruitment and selection of staff and volunteers
- Provide effective management for staff and volunteers through supervision, support and training
- Commit to reviewing policies and identifying good practice at regular intervals
- Identify a named contact person for safeguarding children and provide them with training

Guidance

Staff should have clear guidance on their roles and tasks and what is expected of them - particularly for work requiring close contact with children. There should also be guidance on:

- Physical contact - ensuring confidence in appropriate contact such as comforting a distressed child, intervention to prevent fighting, self-harm or criminal acts, appropriate personal care task. Avoiding inappropriate contact.
- Avoidance of developing personal or inappropriate relationships.
- Safe childcare practice, including taunting, language or behaviour, which may provoke a response.
- Young people and their property.



Roles and Responsibilities

Designated Child Protection Person

Every Madrasah should appoint a named person to be responsible for dealing with any concerns about the protection of children.

The child protection policy and procedures adopted by the Madrasah should have the name of this responsible person, his/her role and responsibilities and how s/he can be contacted, during and outside of Madrasah hours.

The identified person should ensure that s/he keeps up with the current thinking around child protection issues and is knowledgeable about child protection procedures. S/he should receive regular and relevant training on child protection matters (at least every three years).

The role of the Designated Person is to:

- Maintain contact with Children's Services and the Safeguarding Board.
- Provide information and advice on child protection to Imams, teachers and volunteers in the Madrasah.
- Follow agreed procedures and liaise with Children's Services and other agencies, as appropriate.
- Ensure that appropriate information is available at the time of referral to other agencies.
- Keep relevant people within the Madrasah, particularly the Chair and/or Secretary of the Masjid/Madrasah informed of



incidents, any action taken and any further action required, ensuring confidentiality is maintained.

- Ensure that a record is maintained of the action taken by the Madrasah – in a way that maintains confidentiality.
- Advise the Madrasah of child protection training needs and ensure that all volunteers, teachers and Imams undergo Safeguarding Children training provided by the Local Sandwell Sandwell Safeguarding Children Board.



Recruitment and management of volunteers and workers

Safe employment and care practices

Abuse of children can take place in any agency, setting or environment. Working with young people and managing their behaviour can be extremely difficult and steps to intervene can be open to different interpretations. This, in turn, can lead to unease and unwillingness to act appropriately so that the needs of children can be neglected or their safety put at risk. Staff who work with children in any setting and their managers need to be aware of the issues involved and to have available clear guidance on conduct and how to act in given situations.

Enhanced Criminal Records Bureau record checks are essential as are references for potential employees. Failure to implement these checks can put children at risk.

Madrasah should have policies, guidance or practice notes in place on:

- The safe recruitment of staff
- Guidance to staff on personal conduct
- Dealing with complaints and allegations against staff and volunteers

Staff Recruitment

Madrasah should have effective arrangements in place to ensure that people working with children are able to work positively and present no risks.

The arrangements should include:



- Awareness of duties under the Children Act and other legislation and regulations that disqualify people from working with children.
- Arrangements for enhanced pre-employment checks through the Criminal Records Bureau. This should include people appointed from outside the UK.
- Effective selection processes designed to ensure that applicants have the necessary experience, skills and qualities, and to exclude anyone unsuited to work with children.
- Arrangements for taking up references. Where this is for posts working with children, the reference request should include specific questions about whether there have been any concerns about the applicant's conduct or practice and whether or not these have led to formal disciplinary action or concerns. This should be carried out before employment starts.

Personal conduct

Likely situations for abuse of children and protection of staff and volunteers from false accusations can be managed by making sure that everyone is aware that, as a general rule, staff should avoid:

- Spending excessive amounts of time alone with children away from others
- Taking children alone in a car on journeys, however short
- Taking children to their home.

When it is unavoidable, these should only occur with the full knowledge and consent of someone in charge of the Madrasah and the child's parents.

Staff and volunteers in the Madrasah should never:



- Engage in rough physical games
- Allow or engage in inappropriate touching of any form
- Allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged
- Make sexually suggestive comments about or to a child even in fun
- Let allegations a child makes go unchallenged or unrecorded
- Do things of a personal nature for children that they can do themselves.

It may sometimes be necessary for staff and volunteers to do things of a personal nature for children, particularly if they are very young or have a disability. Staff must be sensitive to the child and undertake personal care tasks with the utmost sensitivity. These tasks should only be carried out with the full understanding and consent of parents. In an emergency situation, which requires this type of help, parents should be fully informed, as soon as reasonably possible.



Allegations or a Conviction for Abuse

What happens if someone is convicted of abuse?

No person who has been convicted of an offence against a child should be allowed to act in any position of trust with children. If someone in such a position is convicted of an offence against children they should be dismissed.

What happens where allegations do not lead to conviction?

Most allegations do not result in either a criminal prosecution or a conviction even where there is evidence in support of allegations. The Masjid and Madrasah remain responsible for ensuring the welfare of every child in its care, especially those who might come in contact with an alleged abuser. The absence of criminal conviction is not by itself a sufficient guarantee of suitability for any particular kind of work involving children.

The Trustees or Management Committee, following consultation with the Sandwell Safeguarding Children Board Agencies, will seek to ensure that any future work entrusted to such a person will carry no risk to children and young people. Any decision must be guided by the 'paramouncy principle' – that all other considerations are secondary to the protection and welfare of children from actual or possible abuse.

What happens in the case of allegations of abuse against a teacher, volunteer or anyone else working in a Madrasah?

All allegations should be treated seriously and unless it is very obvious that the allegation cannot be true i.e. that the person who is alleged to have carried out the act was not on the premises at



the time of the alleged incident, the Masjid or Madrasah Trustees or Management Committee should refer the matter to the police or Children's Services 0845 351 0131. The LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer) will also be involved in matters involving persons in a position of trust. For further information and details about the LADO please visit the Sandwell Safeguarding Children Board website www.sandwellscb.org.uk

The Masjid Trustees or Committee will be responsible for suspending or asking the member of staff to refrain from their duties; this removes risk to the child and allows the investigation to proceed.

On advice from the relevant agencies, and without implying guilt:

- The person(s) concerned will be required to take leave from their duties at the Madrasah until investigations are complete.
- Depending on the nature of an allegation, the Trustees or Management Committee will, after consultation with relevant agencies:
 - i. Decide how further contact with children will be avoided during the investigation.
 - ii. Appoint a contact / responsible person from among the Trustees or Management Committee members to support and advise those under investigation or who is the subject of an enquiry.
- Volunteers will be required to withdraw from any Madrasah situation involving children/young people until investigations are complete.



- All individuals working with children have a personal responsibility to safeguard children
- In the event that the Trustees or management committee fail to take the necessary action the individual must.



Concerns about Children

Concerns may arise about children in a variety of ways including:

- The child’s behaviour or what the child says
- An unexplained or suspicious injury
- Sudden changes in child’s behaviour.

Understanding Child Protection

What is child abuse and neglect?

- Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting, by those known to them or, more rarely, by a stranger. They may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child or children.

Signs and Symptoms of Abuse

Physical abuse		Physical abuse includes such things as hitting with the hand, fist, or implement, shaking, slapping, squeezing, burning, biting, giving children alcohol, inappropriate drugs or poison, attempting to suffocate or drown.
Emotional abuse		Emotional abuse occurs when a child is subjected to a persistent lack of affection, warmth or praise, where children are taunted, threatened, or scapegoated.
Sexual abuse		Sexual abuse can be defined as the use of children by adults to meet their own sexual needs and where children do not have the power or understanding to consent to what



		happens to them. It may include sexual intercourse, masturbation, oral sex, anal intercourse, fondling, as well as exposing children to pornographic videos and magazines.
Neglect		Neglect means that there is a failure to meet a child's basic needs for example, for food, warm clothing, leaving children alone or unsupervised, and failing to give love and affection.

What is a disclosure?

A disclosure is when a child tells a staff member or volunteer that they have been, or are being, harmed or abused in some way. This may be physical, sexual, emotional abuse, neglect or bullying.

It is important to reassure the person who has made the disclosure and offer appropriate support.

Any disclosure must be reported to the Designated Person responsible for child protection in the Madrasah.

What to do in the event of a concern

- Listen – try not to make any judgement. Try to alleviate the child's feelings of guilt and isolation.
- Always treat what is being said seriously and accept what is being said. Do not give the child the impression that you do not believe them.
- Do not ask any direct questions.
- Be sensitive.



- Be supportive - advise that you will try to offer support, but that you must pass the information on in the interests of the young person.
- Reassure the person who has spoken to you that they have done the right thing.
- Ensure that all the information is written down. Write down exactly what you have heard while it is still fresh in your mind, including the date and time of your conversation, and any detail shared with you.
- All allegations of actual harm to a child must be acted upon. Share the information to your line manager and child protection designated person immediately. If you can not consult this should not delay sharing the information with the Police or Children's Services
- You can share confidential information if withholding that information will prejudice the welfare of the child.

Children with disabilities are more vulnerable to abuse and less likely to manage in group settings unless extra thought is given to their needs. Teachers and volunteers need to pay special attention to ensure that disabled children are not marginalised in a competitive Madrasah learning environment where more able children may outperform and leave disabled children behind. Special care needs to be offered in the treatment of disabled children and in all interactions with them, to fully consider and meet their needs

People working in Madrasah must:

- Be patient if a child has a learning disability - go with the pace of the child and offer extra assistance to support their learning.



- Have expectations appropriate for the age and ability of all children.
- Take appropriate measures where a child has a physical disability and has access difficulties (including adaptations and adjustments).
- Offer reading materials in large fonts and/or Braille if a child has a visual impairment. There are specialists Islamic institutions who prepare/publish this type of literature.
- Make arrangements/adjustments for a child with a hearing impairment – for example, giving access to a hearing aid or loop system, speaking slowly and ensuring good visibility so the child notices the speaker’s lip movements.
- Be supported through training and development on disability issues



Comments and Complaints

It is quite reasonable for parents and carer's to have the right to complain or make comment if they are unhappy with the care their child receives. A policy demonstrates openness to parents and reassures them that that the Madrasah takes the care of children seriously.

Parents might express concerns about:

- A child's educational progress
- Educational provision
- The child's welfare
- Bullying
- Something that has happened in the Madrasah, or about wider issues, such as:
 - The overall running of the Madrasah
 - The Madrasah's policy
 - The management of the Madrasah
 - The use of a Madrasah's facilities.
 - Any other matter that gives cause for concern.

A complaints policy may include:



- A statement about the Madrasah's willingness to deal with concerns.
- Those areas where it is reasonable to express a concern.
- What action the Madrasah may take.



Bullying

Policy commitment for Madrasah

Madrasah aim to provide a caring, friendly and safe environment for all children, where they can learn in a relaxed and secure environment. Bullying is totally unacceptable at the Madrasah and children should be encouraged to report any incident of bullying or intimidation, Imams, teachers and volunteers need to be vigilant in ensuring that bullying does not occur in the Madrasah.

What is bullying?

Bullying is the use of aggression with the intention of hurting another person. Bullying results in pain and distress to the victim. Bullying can be:

- Emotional
 - Being unfriendly, excluding, tormenting (for example, hiding books or threatening gestures)
- Physical
 - Pushing, kicking, hitting, punching or any use of violence
 - Unwanted physical contact or abusive comments
- Racist
 - Racial taunts, graffiti or gestures
- Verbal



- Name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours or teasing.

Why is it important to respond to bullying?

Bullying hurts. No one deserves to be a victim of bullying. Everybody has the right to be safe and treated with dignity and respect.

The Madrasah has a responsibility to respond promptly and effectively to resolving the issue of bullying.

Signs and Symptoms

A child may indicate by signs or behaviour that he or she is being bullied. Adults should be aware of these possible signs and that they should investigate if a child:

- Is frightened of walking to or from the Madrasah
- Changes their usual routine
- Is unwilling to go to the Madrasah
- Begins to miss sessions at the Madrasah
- Becomes anxious and lacks confidence
- Becomes isolated
- Attempts or threatens suicide or runs away
- Feels ill before going to the Madrasah
- Performance deteriorates at the Madrasah.
- Comes home with clothes torn or books damaged
- Asks for money or starts stealing money
- Has unexplained cuts or bruises
- Becomes aggressive, disruptive or unreasonable
- Is frightened to say what's wrong

These signs and behaviours are not exclusive to bullying, it may indicate other difficulties, but bullying should be considered as a possibility and should be investigated



Procedures

Having a procedure in place and making it known to parents, and children will help create an environment where children are more likely to speak up if they are being bullied or know someone who is. The approach should include:

- Reporting bullying incidents to staff at the Madrasah
- A record of bullying incidents noted in the incident/accident record book. (See sample form 6)
- In serious cases, parents should be informed and asked to come in to a meeting to discuss the problem
- If necessary and appropriate, in consultation with parents, report the matter to the Police or other appropriate agency
- The bullying behaviour or threats of bullying must be investigated and the bullying must be stopped quickly.



Health and Safety

The Health and Safety Regulations 1981 require relevant provision of First Aid equipment. It is essential that relevant equipment is available at the Madrasah, so that the first aid can be given to anyone who is injured or becomes ill.

The minimum provision required at the Madrasah is:

- A nominated person to act as a first aider. This person should be appropriately trained
- A suitably stocked First Aid box should be available, accessible and clearly marked. It is advised that no medicine or tablets are kept in this box
- Ensure that all incidents/accidents are recorded on the Incident/Accident form
- Ensure that the Emergency Contact Number is prominently displayed.



Conclusion

The Sandwell Safeguarding Children Board and the IMAN group would like to thank those local Masjid and Madrasah who have supported us in developing this toolkit.

It provides a framework for Madrasah to further develop structures and practice to keep children safe and provide opportunities for them to achieve their full potential.

It is a document that could be applicable to and adopted by any faith community and recognises that all children, irrespective of their faith, culture, ethnicity, ability and background deserve the opportunity to achieve their full potential and grow up in an environment that is protective in keeping them free from harm.

We hope that this will lead to a closer working relationship between the Sandwell Safeguarding Children Board and Sandwell Masjid and Madrasah. Please remember that we are able to offer further training and details can be found on our website.

The Sandwell Safeguarding Children Board is also able to offer advice and support with developing policies and procedures. We can be contacted via our website at www.sandwellscb.org.uk or by telephoning **0121 569 4800**.

