

ROBUST PROCESSES DURING CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS DELIVER EFFECTIVE SAFEGUARDING



“The stakes are high. Safeguarding of children and young people is of paramount importance. Policies formed by Head teachers and Governors that fail to ‘adequately’ safeguard can have hard hitting Ofsted and legal implications for schools. The accountability is with Head teachers and Governors.”

Richard Jones - Schools Direct and Diocese Commission Manager

Scores of people, from many different companies and organisations gain access to a School during a construction project. Access is often unrestricted.

The challenge

Consultants, Local Authority representatives, building inspectors, main building contractor, subcontractors (including ground workers, bricklayers, electricians, plumbers, plasterers, decorators...) all have access to schools leading up to and during a construction project. The list of individuals visiting the school from a variety of companies and organisations can seem endless.

For a significant proportion of most projects site personnel are segregated in a self contained site. But does segregation provide a restricted access that is effective enough for

Safeguarding? Does it matter who is on the site over the hoarding? What about less restricted access at the beginning and end of construction projects when the extent of the site is not as clear?

There are many questions and challenges for schools to deal with during projects. There are elements of building work that are not easy to contain, such as window replacement around an entire school and work required to electrical services where much wider access to the school is required.

The response

One approach to take is to view all workers undertaking construction activities in schools as visitors. As such schools need to manage this significant additional volume of visitors in accordance with their safeguarding policy.

There are cost implications towards contractors in the requirements demanded of them and as such, it is also important to set out the requirements at tender stage to avoid additional costs and delays to construction projects later on.

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Our experience with clients on many projects has highlighted eight key steps that can play a major role in achieving effective safeguarding:

1. Complete segregation of site from the school wherever possible.
2. Contractor's management team, including site foreman to have Enhanced CRB disclosure.
3. All workers, including subcontractors that will have access to the school, beyond site hoarding/boundary to have Enhanced CRB disclosure.
4. All workers to have minimum 'list 99' clearance, but ideally Enhanced Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) disclosure.
5. Contractor to manage list of workers that are on site and provide information to school on a daily basis.
6. Everyone working beyond the site hoarding/boundary or visiting the school should fully comply with the school's procedures prior to accessing the school. This might include presenting an original CRB certificate and photographic identification.
7. Deliveries to site should only be to the segregated site compound and managed/supervised by the main contractor.
8. Mobile phones with a camera facility belonging to workers should be left in the site cabin.

Changes ahead

From 2010 the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) disclosure process will work alongside the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA) registration. All new people being checked will need to be ISA registered and from 2015 all people working in a regulated activity must be ISA registered.

Who's accountable?

Head teachers and Governors are accountable. It's the School that needs to make the call concerning the extent of management policies and procedures that are implemented and have confidence that they are effective in safeguarding children and young people during construction projects.

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