

NSPCC Advice Keeping children safe away from home (sports-clubs-activities)

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Tutors and supporting children's learning

The COVID pandemic has had a big impact on children's education, and you may be worried about your child falling behind with their school work or struggling to catch up. You may be thinking about getting a tutor to support your child during this time, or depending where you are in the UK they may be getting extra support or tutoring through school.

Some parents also hire a tutor to help support children with special education needs and disabilities or learning difficulties such as autism or dyslexia. Parents who aren't sending their children back to school may also be considering tutoring as part of home schooling.

Should I get a tutor for my child?

Tutors can work with groups of children or work with children one-to-one, which usually involves visiting or teaching children at their home or in the tutor's home. Tutors have an important role in children's lives and often build close relationships with children and their families. It's vital to think about safety and wellbeing for your child, whether the tutor will be teaching them in your home, their own home or online.

There are steps parents can take to help make sure a tutor is safe for your child:

Ask your child what they'd prefer and how it's going

- Consider your child's needs and preferences when it comes to tuition and learning. You could ask them what they'd find most helpful for their learning and if they have a preference around whether the tutoring takes place at home or online.
- Also ask your child how the tutoring's going regularly – to make sure they're still comfortable with the arrangement.

Ask the tutor about references and vetting checks

- Make sure the tutor undertakes appropriate vetting checks and that you are happy they are suited to working with children before you hire them. This should include criminal records checks and full reference checks as a minimum.
- A tutor should be able to show you up to date references and criminal records certificates, and an agency will be able to confirm these are in place before they start.
- The types of checks they can provide will vary depending on the nature and regularity of their work with children, and also whether the tutor is directly employed (for example, by an agency) or self-employed (as an independent tutor). Find out more about the [types of checks available for tutors](#).

Agree boundaries and expectations before the tutoring starts

- Talk to the tutor about boundaries and appropriate behaviours before they start. You may want to agree a list of appropriate behaviours and expectations together to prevent any misunderstandings, including if the session is online. This should include agreeing how you'll communicate with the tutor outside of sessions, for example by text, phone or email. Make sure the tutor always contacts you and

never has direct contact with your child outside a session.

- Agree how the tutoring will take place safely, whether it's online or in someone's home. For example, you'll need a desk or table where children can work quietly and it shouldn't be in a bedroom. Make sure the door to the room is left open, the room has windows with open curtains so that someone can see in, and that you or another adult are within earshot. You may want to sit in on the session. You shouldn't leave your child alone with a tutor and go out.
- Ask the tutor for regular updates on your child's progress, for example at the end of each session, and discuss any concerns or issues that might have come up during sessions.

Speak to us if you're worried

If you have any concerns about a tutor who's working with your child, it's important to get help right away. Our helpline counsellors can offer advice and support if you're worried. Call us on [0808 800 5000](tel:08088005000), email help@nspcc.org.uk or fill in our [online form](#).

Worried about a child?

If you think a child or young person is at immediate risk of harm, call the police on [999](tel:999).

If there's no immediate danger and you're unsure what to do, contact our Helpline by calling [0808 800 5000](tel:08088005000), emailing help@nspcc.org.uk or submitting our [online form](#).

For more information about child abuse, please read our advice on [bullying](#), [physical abuse](#), [grooming](#) and [neglect](#).

[Get advice and support](#)

Keeping safe outside of school

Sports, clubs and other activities are a great way to learn new skills and make new friends. Whether it's a drama class or martial arts club, arts and crafts or band practice, hobbies and activities can be an important part of growing up and learning to be more independent.



It's important to make sure your kids are safe and happy, wherever they are. We've got advice to help keep your children safe at their club, sport or activity, so they can focus on training, learning and having fun. We also have lots of information about [staying safe at school](#).

Laws to protect children in sports, clubs and other activities

Any club or organisation working with children or young people has a responsibility to keep them safe.

We outline key things to look for when finding the right club or activity for your child in our checklist below. If you're an organisation working with children, try NSPCC Learning's [Safeguarding Checklist tool](#) to check your policies will keep children and young people safe. Our Child Protection in Sport Unit also provide a [self-assessment tool](#) specifically for sports organisations.

It's important to be aware of the [loophole in the law](#) that may put kids at risk of sexual abuse in clubs, sports and other activities. Although it's illegal for teachers, care workers and youth justice workers to have sex with 16 and 17 year olds, this still isn't the case for everyone with a position of power over young people – including sports coaches, volunteers and youth group leaders.

The law says teachers aren't allowed to have sex with 16 or 17 year olds in their care.

Help Close the Loophole

Help us #CloseTheLoophole in the law so it's illegal for all adults to engage in sexual activity with any young person under 18 in their care.

Take action

What to look for in a club, sport or other activity

It's important to look for a club, sport or activity that takes the safety and wellbeing of your child seriously. Always check whether the club or organisation is accredited or otherwise affiliated to a body (e.g. a sports governing body or national voluntary sector or faith organisation) as this should mean they have the right safeguarding policies and procedures in place.

Even if they're accredited, there are some key things to look for to ensure they take children's safety seriously.

Our checklist of things to look out for



- A **welfare or child protection officer** you can contact about safeguarding or with any concerns.
- Clear procedures and processes for raising **complaints and concerns**.
- **Written standards of good practice** – like a code of conduct or code of behaviour. This should outline the boundaries that staff and volunteers should respect when working with children and young people and should address things like discrimination and bullying and social media behaviour.
- Effective **consent and emergency processes**. You should receive a form asking for your consent to the activity, for your contact details, and any relevant medical information about your child from the club or organisation.
- A **safe recruitment process** for staff and volunteers, including **vetting**. This means they have

appropriate references, criminal records checks and the right technical qualifications for the activity.

- Staff and volunteers are **trained in safeguarding** (child protection). NSPCC Learning provides information and online courses if you work with children.
- Children and young people are suitably supervised (based on their age, ability, the activity and venue) by adults who are trained to care for them.
- The activity takes place in a **safe environment** – and there are separate changing areas for children and adults.

Remember, it's never wrong to ask for more information when it comes to children's safety, wellbeing and safeguarding. Organisations should welcome questions about their activities and policies and should have answers on hand if you ask.

Our Child Protection in Sport Unit goes into more detail about each of our checklist points in their information for parents and carers. NSPCC Learning provides more information about safeguarding in other organisations.

Advice for parents

Checking in with your child

Even if the organisation seems safe, it's best to keep talking to your child and making sure they're enjoying their experience. If something's wrong, it's important they feel like they can talk to you about it.

Stay involved

Staying involved in your child's activities – whether that's sports, performing arts or any activity they take on – helps keep them safe and means you can support them with whatever they need.

It can help to consider what you want your child to get out of the activity. Is this also what they want? What do they need from you? You can help to make sure their experience is positive by taking an interest and being supportive from the sidelines whatever the result.

Our Child Protection in Sport Unit has plenty of advice about [how to support your kids](#) – and we're asking parents and carers to make our [Sports Parents Promise](#) to their kids.

Health and safety

When choosing a club or activity with your child, it's important to make sure they have clear health and safety procedures in place.

Clubs and organisations will list important sports and safety equipment if it's needed – particularly for outdoor activities like the Duke of Edinburgh Awards, or contact sports like rugby, martial arts or boxing. Read through all the information you receive carefully and make sure your child has everything they need to stay safe, warm and dry.

Children and young people's health should always come first – however important the match, game or event may feel. If they aren't getting time for rest or recovery this could have a knock-on effect for their health and wellbeing.

The NHS has guidelines on how much physical activity children [under 5](#) and children and young people from [5-18](#) should be doing.

Overnight stays

When your child is travelling or staying somewhere overnight with a club or organisation it's essential you're clear on the safeguarding procedures to keep your child safe.

These include:

- consent forms
- emergency contact details
- clear, pre-agreed sleeping arrangements
- your child can contact you if they want to.

NSPCC Learning provides more information about [overnight stays](#) and our Child Protection in Sport Unit has information about [overnight stays with sports organisations](#).

Concerned about a child?

If you're worried about a child, always talk to someone. If there is something wrong, you may not just be helping one child, you could be helping many children who may be at risk.

If you think:

- a child is in immediate danger of abuse, contact the police on [999](#)
- there's no immediate danger and you're unsure what to do – [call](#), [email](#) or [submit an online form](#) to our Helpline, and we'll give advice and take action if needed.

Bullying

Bullying is never OK – whether it's another child or it's someone in a position of authority.

[Read more](#)

Physical abuse

If you've seen something that worries you like bruises or marks, it's better to be safe and let someone know.

[Read more](#)

Grooming

Coaches and group leaders are in a position of power over young people, which sometimes they abuse.

[Read more](#)

Neglect

If you notice a child doesn't have equipment, or they're not being fed or looked after, let someone know.

[Read more](#)

Raising your concerns to a club or organisation

It's important to put your child first and to trust your instincts. If something's wrong, you aren't just helping them by reporting it, you're helping everyone keep kids safer.

If there's something wrong and you're concerned, follow the organisation's guidelines for recording and reporting concerns, and speak to their welfare officer. Our Helpline can provide expert advice and support - call us on [0808 800 5000](tel:08088005000), email help@nspcc.org.uk or fill in our [online form](#).

Is your child ready to be left home alone?

If you're unsure whether your child is ready to be left home alone, we have advice to help you decide. We also have some useful tips to help keep them safe when you're not there.

[Find out more](#)