



Norfolk Safeguarding
Children Partnership

SUPPLEMENTARY GUIDE

Keeping Fathers in Sight good practice guide:

For schools and colleges

2023 Edition

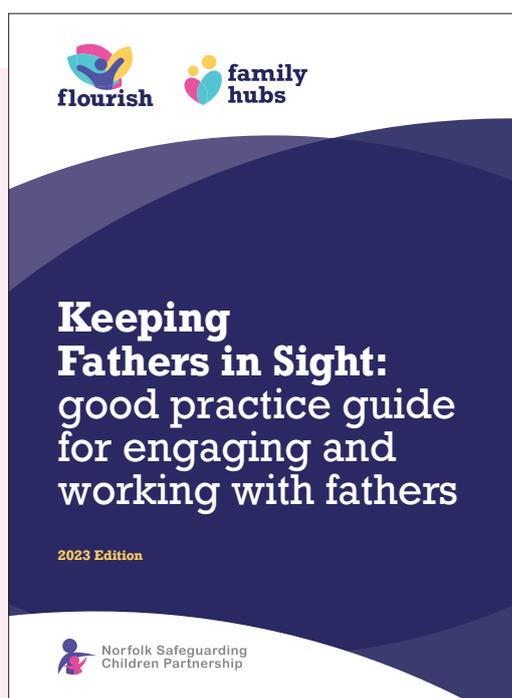




This document is to be used in conjunction with:

Keeping Fathers in Sight: good practice guide for engaging and working with fathers.

Which sets out the key principles for working with fathers.



Department for Education guidance states that schools are required by law to engage with pupils' parents in a number of different ways and also that school and local authority staff must treat all parents equally. The structure of families may not be straightforward, frequently occupying more than one household, and parental conflict and disagreement can make this a difficult and complex arena to navigate. The guidance below is written to support schools in this process, but this is not a complete and authoritative statement of the law in relation to this.

The Education Act 1996 defines 'parent' as:

- all natural parents, whether they are married or not,
- any person who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility for a child or young person,
- any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child or young person (having care of a child or young person means that a person with whom the child lives and who looks after the child, irrespective of what their relationship is with the child, is considered to be a parent in education law).

Schools should seek to gain contact details for all parents as so that they can add these to the admissions register. Education regulations state that the admission register for every school should include the name and address of every person known to be a parent of each pupil. Schools should therefore take all possible steps to secure this information.

In cases where a school does not know the contact details of a non-resident parent, it should make the resident parent aware that the other parent is entitled to be involved in their child's education and request that information is passed on. If the resident parent refuses to share information with the other parent and also refuses to provide contact details so that the school can deal directly with the non-resident parent, they have the right to do so, and the school can do nothing more than ask for that information.

It is expected that all professionals will persist and be creative in trying to find out contact details for the non-resident parent and not solely rely on the resident parent to provide these. Whilst the resident parent is not required to provide contact details for the other parent, it is important that as practitioners build rapport and develop trust, that they continue to ask for these and explain the need to do this for the benefit of the child and continue to seek their contact details with other organisations who work with the family (please see toolkit worksheets *Working with mothers to engage fathers and Fathers and outcomes for children*).

When the school has contact details of another parent and the resident parent does not want the school to contact the other parent of their child, it is not the resident parent's role to make that decision. Schools are not required to seek the consent of the parent with whom the child resides before either recording the contact details of the non-resident parent, or sending them their child's prescribed statutory educational information.

As highlighted above, school and local authority staff must treat all parents equally, unless a court order limits a parent's ability to make educational decisions, participate in school life or receive information about their children. This is not limited to parents who hold parental responsibility but includes those outlined in the definition above. Everyone who is a parent, as recognised under education law can participate in their child's education.

Having parental responsibility does not allow a parent to obstruct a school from carrying out their duties under legislation.

When a parent states that there is a court order preventing or limiting contact, schools should ask the parent to ensure they provide the school with a copy of the most recent court order in place.

Contact details for all parents should be shared by any organisation at times of admission or transition. Any gaps or omissions of contact details for all parents should be questioned and reviewed. Without comprehensive understanding of the child's family network, appreciating the child's lived experience is not possible.





Useful references

Longitudinal analysis being conducted by Leeds and Manchester Universities on paternal involvement and its effects on children's education
<https://piecestudy.org/>

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006
([legislation.gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dealing-with-issues-relating-to-parental-responsibility/understanding-and-dealing-with-issues-relating-to-parental-responsibility#introduction))

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dealing-with-issues-relating-to-parental-responsibility/understanding-and-dealing-with-issues-relating-to-parental-responsibility#introduction>

<https://piecestudy.org/blog/supporting-fathers-to-get-more-involved-at-school/>





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