



Safeguarding Awareness Week Survey 2024 Findings Report

Featuring responses from almost 700 educators from across the UK.



Contents

Welcome	1
Reporting	2
Safeguarding confidence	4
Online safeguarding concerns	6
Positive results	9
Conclusion	11



Welcome to the 2024 Safeguarding Awareness Week Survey Findings Report

The role of a safeguarding lead is a position almost unique among school staff.

Safeguarding leads take on high levels of responsibility, they deal with dozens of external agencies and organisations while staying on top of ever-changing risks, processes and expectations. It's an always-on role which, for many, must be carried out on top of teaching.

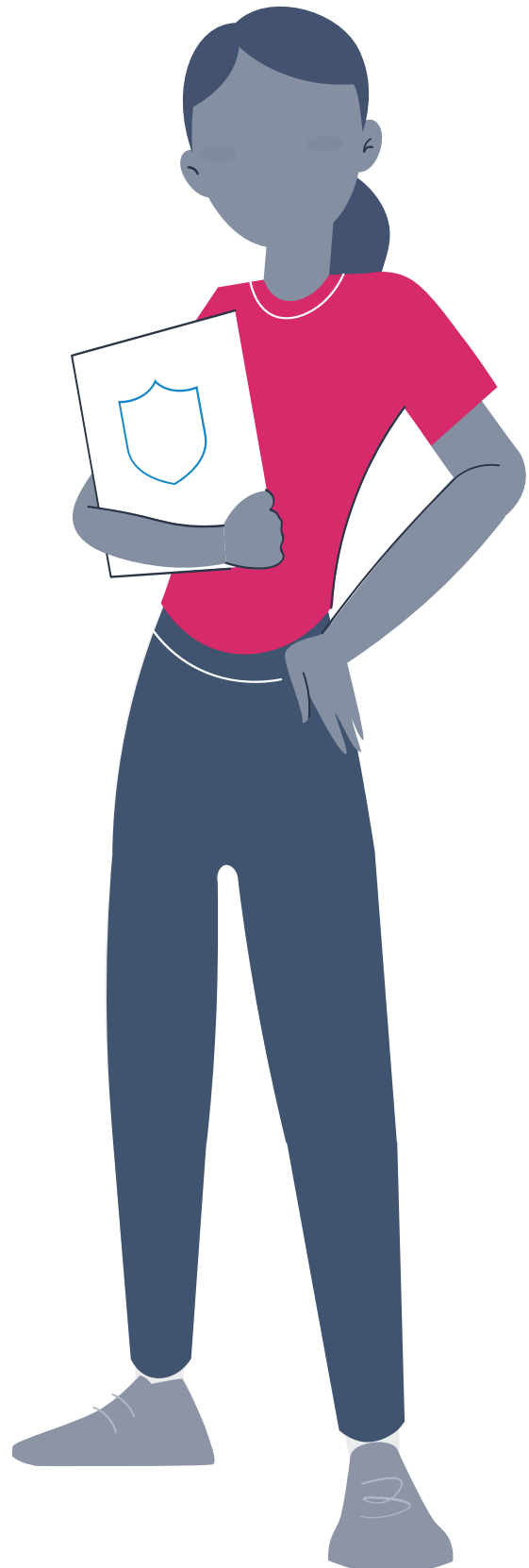
Against a backdrop of stretched budgets, a cost-of-living crisis and recruitment and retention difficulties across the sector, it's certainly not a job for the faint-hearted. But our survey shows it's a role taken on by the most passionate and caring educators – laser focused on making schools as safe as they can be and protecting everyone's right to feel safe.

In the lead up to Safeguarding Awareness Week 2024 – our annual week dedicated to raising awareness of, and sharing best practice in, safeguarding – we received close to 700 responses to our annual survey, from educators across the UK.

Our survey asked questions around safeguarding processes in their schools, the trends and common concerns among children in schools and the regularity and scale of safeguarding concerns within schools.

Before we explore the results further, we'd like to say a big thank you to all those educators who shared their thoughts and took five minutes out of their busy week to help us build a picture of safeguarding across the country.

Our goal, as always, is to build a clearer understanding of some of the challenges faced by safeguarding leads and to raise awareness of those challenges to the wider education community, offering potential solutions and support where possible.

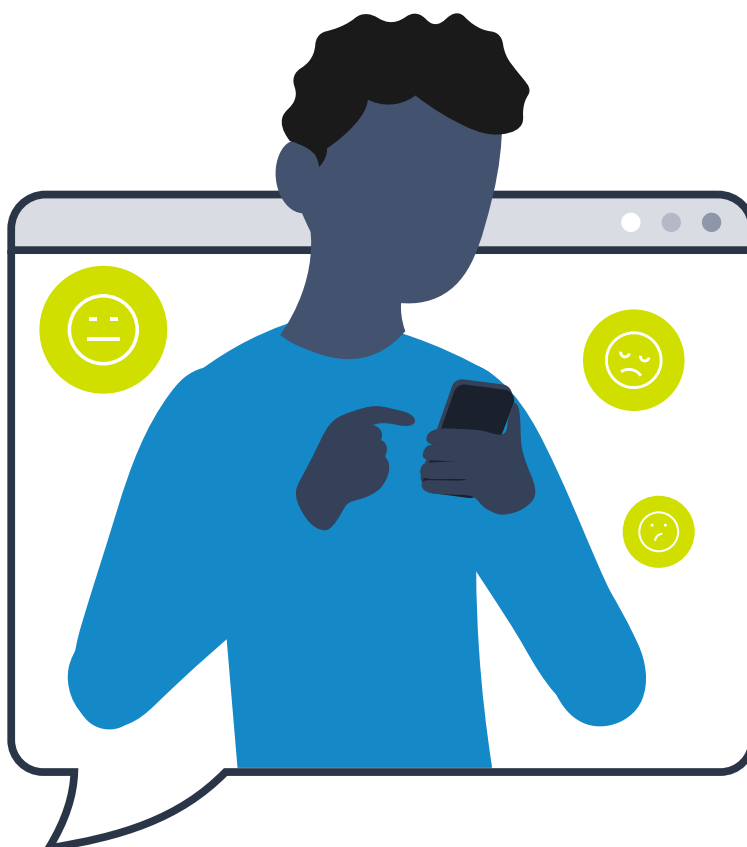
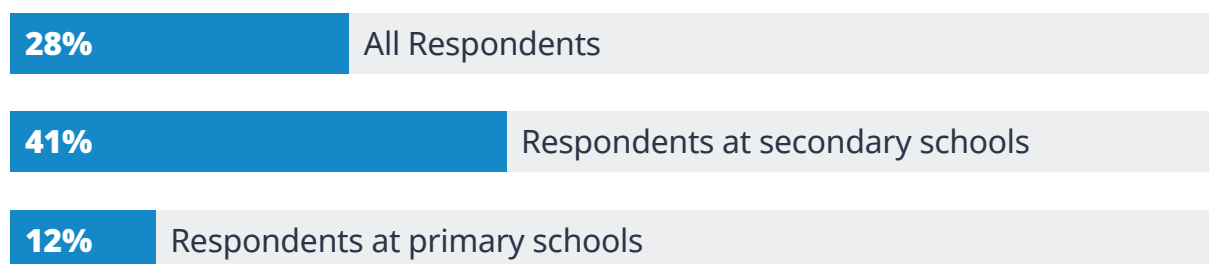


Reporting

Our survey found that reporting safeguarding concerns and making disclosures was still done largely face-to-face and in person with 90% of all respondents saying that in their school safeguarding concerns are reported by telling staff directly.

In a question where multiple answers could be selected, perhaps surprisingly only 28% of educators told us that they use an online system to make reports. More secondary schools had online systems set up with 41% of educators noting they had this in place, but far fewer primary schools – with only 12% saying they had an online reporting system. This could be one area where time could potentially be saved – and the mental load lightened, particularly for safeguarding leads – by utilising online tools and software to ensure nothing is missed or overlooked.

Respondents whose students use an online system for reporting



How regularly are staff getting safeguarding issues reported to them? It seems the majority are seeing new safeguarding concerns arise on a weekly basis. 34% of all survey respondents told us a child will come to them every week with a new concern and with safeguarding leads specifically, this figure jumped to 45%, while 14% of all respondents and 24% of safeguarding leads said they see new safeguarding concerns daily.

On the other hand, a small segment reported that they only see new safeguarding concerns arise every six months or yearly. Although this segment was only 10% of all respondents, it does mean that one in 10 educators are only having one or two safeguarding concerns reported per year. This could be a sign of a portion of extremely safe schools or may also indicate uncertainty in children about what to report and how to report it.

In every school, it's vital that children are made aware of, encouraged and regularly reminded about what could constitute a safeguarding concern and how to share it.

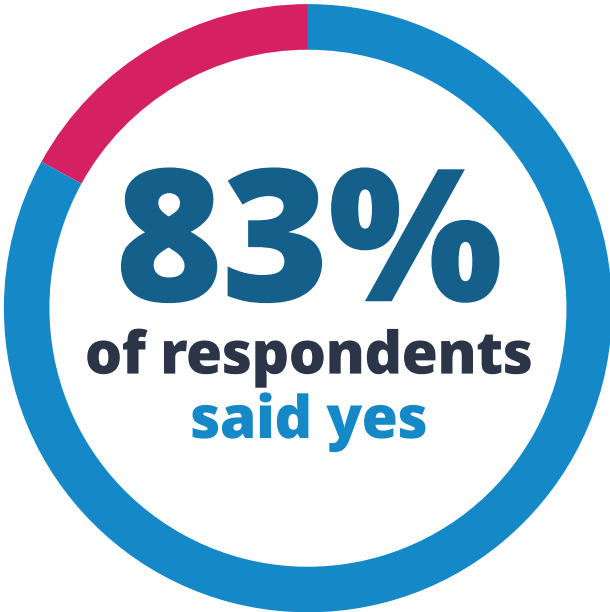
The importance of this is further underlined by 75% of respondents saying that students are only sometimes reporting safeguarding concerns before they're noticed by staff. 22% of respondents said that students never report concerns before they're picked up by staff.



Safeguarding confidence

Looking at the results in this area of our survey it seems that the majority of educators feel confident in their safeguarding practice. 83% of all respondents told us that they feel confident reporting or handling disclosures of sexual harassment, abuse or violence. This is despite 34% saying that they felt guidance for schools on how to deal with allegations of this sort was insufficient.

“Do you feel confident in handling reports or disclosures of sexual harassment, abuse or violence?”



There was also confidence in dealing with safeguarding issues more generally with 95% of all respondents telling us that they always or sometimes feel confident in their safeguarding practice. Reassuringly, not a single designated safeguarding lead told us that they rarely or never felt confident dealing with a safeguarding issue.

“Do you feel like you have the confidence to deal with a safeguarding issue, no matter what it may be?”



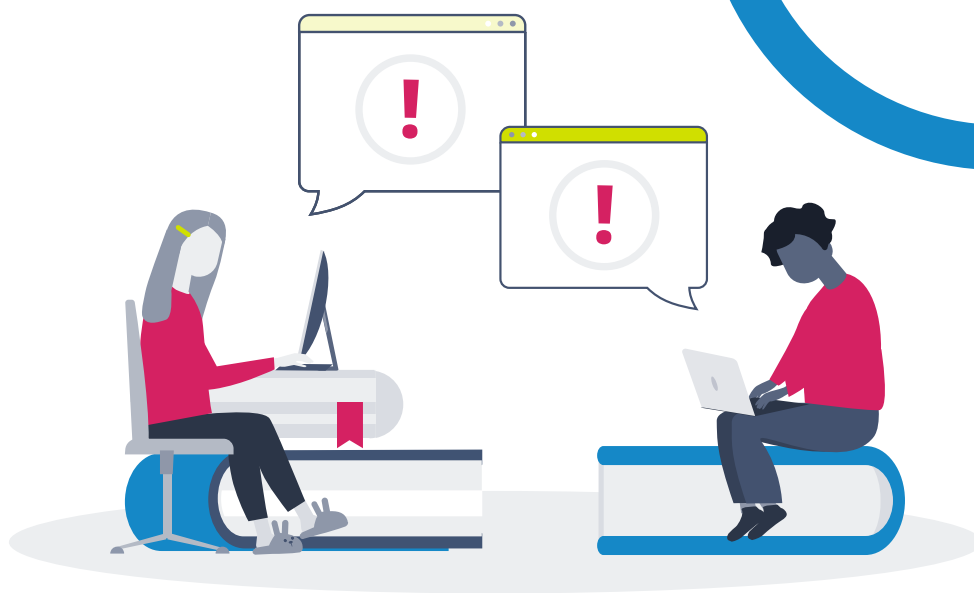
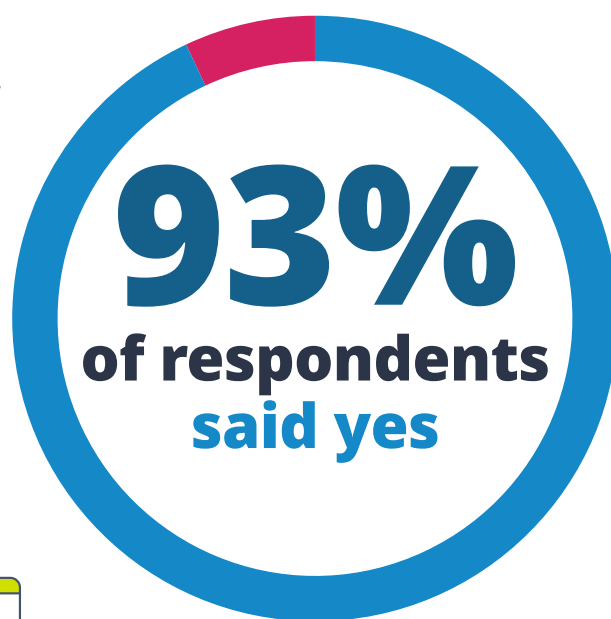
Primary school teachers generally felt slightly less confident in all areas of safeguarding when compared to secondary school teachers and the survey average. Although survey-wide 83% said they feel confident handling serious cases such as sexual harassment, abuse or violence, only 79% of primary school teachers agreed with the statement. In dealing with a safeguarding issue, no matter what it may be, 52% of primary school teachers told us they would always feel confident, compared to 56% of secondary school teachers and 53% of all respondents.

When it comes to children reporting safeguarding issues, educators have a high level of faith in their students. 54% of all respondents and 64% of safeguarding leads believe children in their setting feel confident to report concerns. Another 44% of all respondents said children would sometimes have that confidence, whereas just 3% answered that children would only rarely or never feel confident to make concerns aware, dropping to just 0.5% among safeguarding leads.

Online safeguarding concerns

Our survey showed that online safeguarding is a growing concern for educators. 93% of all respondents told us that safeguarding has become harder because of children becoming more autonomous online. The ease and accessibility of getting online is causing more safeguarding concerns which are coming into school and having to be picked up by safeguarding leads.

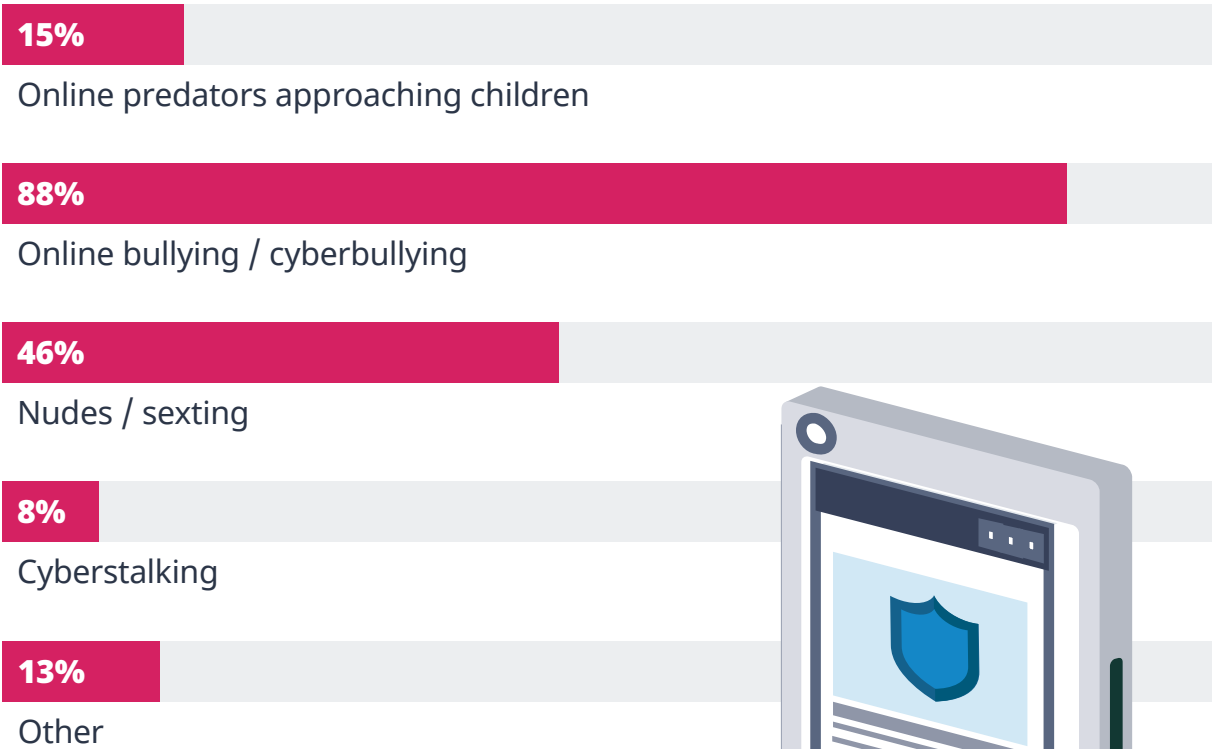
“Do you feel that safeguarding has become harder now children are more autonomous online?”



87% of all respondents told us that they saw online or cyber bullying taking place regularly with 45% also saying that nudes and sexting have become regular issues. Even more worryingly 15% said that they were also seeing issues with online predators approaching children. These results clearly illustrate some of the dangers of going online and should give senior leaders and classroom teachers an indication of the safeguarding areas that need to be given priority in lessons and across the whole school.

In secondary schools, respondents told us that online bullying and nudes/sexting were the most regular form of online safeguarding issues they see. In a multiple-choice question, 89% picked cyberbullying and 62% selected nudes/sexting as a regular problem. In primary schools, online bullying was overwhelmingly the biggest issue with 90% of respondents saying they see this happening regularly.

“What sort of online safeguarding issues do you see most regularly?” (Multiple choice)



When it comes to the levels of general safeguarding concerns being seen this year compared to previous years, all respondents agreed that there has been a sizeable increase. 59% of all respondents and 68% of safeguarding leads believed there has been an increase in safeguarding concerns compared to 2023, these numbers jumped to 85% of all respondents and 92% of safeguarding leads who agreed there are more safeguarding concerns now than five years ago.



“Do you feel there are more safeguarding concerns now compared to 5 years ago?”

85%

**of all respondents
said yes**



92%

**of safeguarding
leads said yes**

Of those who said they’d seen an increase year-on-year, 30% of all respondents and 27% of safeguarding leads blamed the increased use of social media with more and more children engaging with social media platforms. On a more positive note, a greater awareness among children of what constitutes a safeguarding concern was also cited as a reason for the increase, with 15% of all respondents suggesting this as a contributing factor.

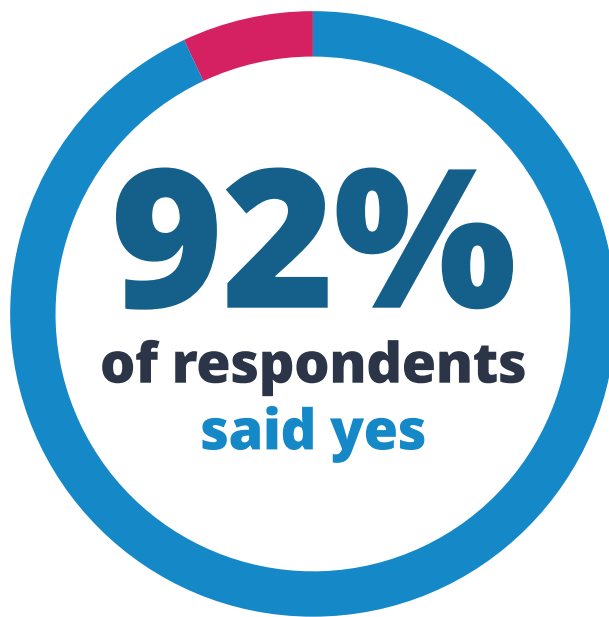
Here there is another split between primary and secondary school teachers in what they believed to be driving the increase in safeguarding issues. The leading cause in primary schools was an increase in home issues, selected by 36% of respondents. This was followed by 25% attributing the rise to an increased use of social media. Respondents in secondary schools rated social media usage as the main driving factor, selected by 30% of respondents, with only 12% citing home issues and perhaps surprisingly, 15% saying an increased awareness of safeguarding issues was a driving factor.

These results should be a flashing light on the dashboard for senior leaders with students only spending more time online and becoming more engaged with social media. This should be a major focus for safeguarding teaching in both primary and secondary classes to help children navigate the dangers online and therefore supporting the workload of the safeguarding leads.

Positive results

Although there have been some worrying and even alarming results from this survey, there are also some positives. Educators feel very confident that their schools and settings are safe environments for children, with 92% of all respondents and 94% of safeguarding leads agreeing. 90% of all respondents and 99% of safeguarding leads also believe that their students feel safe at school.

“As a whole, do you feel your school is a safe environment?”



Respondents also felt that training, regardless of experience, was another big positive, which is likely to contribute to their confidence in their abilities to help keep students safe. 74% of all respondents said that the safeguarding content during their teacher training was either adequate or somewhat adequate, and 93% said the same of the safeguarding training they've received in their setting.

The safeguarding leads were even more positive, with 98% saying the training in their setting was at least somewhat adequate. Perhaps this is unsurprising as

they may be responsible for delivering the training in their setting. It was also great to see that the vast majority of respondents agreed that the policies and procedures for safeguarding in their setting were at least somewhat effective, with only 6% saying they weren't effective or they weren't sure. This jumped to 98% of safeguarding leads who said their policies and procedures were effective or somewhat effective.

Again, this is potentially unsurprising as it may be those same safeguarding leads who write the policies.

These positive results highlight the strong foundations in place across the majority of schools to support and protect their students, and the pride educators take in providing students with a safe environment is also clear to see.



Conclusion

The results from our Safeguarding Awareness Week 2024 Survey paint a picture of a passionate, caring, largely confident and highly observant safeguarding workforce. A workforce that is dealing with ever-increasing levels of concerns that are evolving in nature to become more online focused and being reported more as the student population becomes better informed.



Senior leaders will no doubt be pleased to see that staff feel confident, are happy with the policies and procedures in place at their setting and feel they provide a safe space for children. However, there will be growing concerns about the number of concerns originating online and the behaviour of students beyond the school gates and in the digital world. More training, teaching and attention could be put in place to ensure children have the tools to handle these dangers, particularly when online.

There must also be major concerns around the workload of safeguarding leads with an ever-increasing number of issues arising. With the majority of respondents agreeing that there has been an increase in cases over the past five years and almost two-thirds agreeing there has been an increase over that last 12 months, it's clear that workload and the mental load which accompanies this will be a major problem for those leading on safeguarding.

To provide these safeguarding leads with more support, senior leaders could look at investing in software to cut down on administration by putting all the vital information in a single, accessible location.

Overall, while these results show that safeguarding leads are without doubt facing a challenging landscape, they remain highly resilient and confident in their knowledge and processes. This is, at the very least, a major positive to take and a major cause for appreciation in our hardworking safeguarding leads across the country.

Together, we build trusted education solutions



Learn more about how we can support you with safeguarding.

tes.com/safeguarding-awareness-week