

A BRILLIANT ME IN ACTION ONE PAGE GUIDE TO...

PROTECTIVE BEHAVIOURS

The Protective Behaviours Process (PBs) is a practical approach to personal safety and resilience. It's based on two key messages:

1. We all have the right to feel safe all the time.
2. We can talk with someone about anything, even if it feels awful.

WHAT?

PBs helps children understand early warning signs, build trusted relationships, and develop the confidence to seek help.

A PBs approach (*Strategies for Safety and Wellbeing*) is identified by Anna Freud (in the Education for Wellbeing research project) as a potentially effective curriculum resource to increase skills in personal safety and managing mental health. The latest DfE PHSE guidance has added an increased focus on safety alongside a mental health focus).

WHY?

PBs promotes emotional literacy, self-awareness and problem-solving.

PBs supports the development of internal and external supportive strategies.

	Protective Behaviours Themes	Related CASEL Competencies	How they complement each other
SEL?	Theme 1: We all have the right to feel safe, all the time.	Self-Awareness & Social Awareness	Helps children notice feelings and bodily cues when they don't feel safe; connects with understanding their emotions and others'. Encourages empathy and recognition of different comfort levels.
	Early Warning Signs (EWS)	Self-Awareness & Self-Management	Supports children to recognise internal signals (e.g. "butterflies in my tummy") and practise calming or grounding strategies. This builds emotional regulation and confidence in managing stress.
	Safety Continuum (Safe / Fun-to-Feel-Scared / Risking-on-Purpose / Unsafe)	Responsible Decision-Making	Encourages reflection before action — assessing what feels safe, when to take healthy risks (e.g. trying something new), and when to seek help. Strengthens decision-making and risk assessment.
	Networks of Support	Relationship Skills	Reinforces identifying trusted adults and peers, improving help-seeking behaviour and communication. Promotes connection and belonging — key to emotional safety in schools.
	Theme 2: We can talk with someone about anything even if it feels awful or small.	Relationship Skills & Social Awareness	Builds a classroom culture of trust, empathy, and openness. Normalises talking about worries or mistakes, aligning with SEL's emphasis on emotional expression and healthy communication.
	Problem-Solving and Safety Planning	Responsible Decision-Making & Self-Management	Encourages proactive thinking, considering consequences, and managing emotions when resolving conflicts or facing difficulties.

FIND OUT MORE

- <https://www.headstartkernow.org.uk/protective-behaviours-training/>
- See our short, online interactive introduction to PBs
- <https://www.protectivebehaviours.org>
- <https://www.protectivebehavioursconsortium.co.uk/>
- **Book:** *Helping Vulnerable Children and Adolescents to Stay Safe: Creative Ideas and Activities for Building Protective Behaviours* by Katie Wrench

