



Department  
for Education

# **Background information for Working Together and the National Framework**

**Improving Practice with Children, Young  
People and Families**

**December 2023**

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## Summary

As part of the reforms to children's social care, government has committed to set greater national direction for practice. Issuing [Working Together to Safeguard Children](#) (Working Together 2023) and the [Children's Social Care National Framework](#) (National Framework) as new statutory guidance, is a significant milestone. Together, these important pieces of statutory guidance are a first step, providing clarity on how safeguarding partners, relevant agencies and others can all work towards the vision for supporting children, young people and families, which is set out in the government's strategy, Stable Homes Built on Love.

This document provides important background information on Working Together 2023, the National Framework and how statutory guidance aligns to children's social care reform.

This document does not replace the National Framework or Working Together 2023. It is important that all safeguarding partners and relevant agencies read and follow the full statutory guidance documents.

## Expiry or review date

This document will be reviewed and updated, where necessary, in line with the National Framework and Working Together to Safeguard Children.

## Who is this publication for?

This guidance is for:

- All statutory safeguarding partners and [relevant agencies](#).

## Background to Working Together to Safeguard Children

Working Together to Safeguard Children is the multi-agency statutory guidance that sets out expectations for the system that provides help, support and protection for children and their families. It applies at every level, to all agencies and organisations that work directly with children and families. This includes:

- local authorities
- health
- policing
- other relevant agencies, organisations and individuals that are essential to children's safety and wellbeing.

In the Children's Social Care: Stable Homes, Built on Love strategy, government set out plans to transform children's social care. Revising Working Together to Safeguard Children was central to the first phase of this, including:

- strengthening multi-agency working across the whole system of help, support and protection for children and their families
- a child-centred approach within a whole family focus
- strong, effective and consistent child protection practice

Updates have been made following collaboration with other government departments, stakeholders, the national multi-agency safeguarding and child protection working group, and a public consultation.

An overview of the changes to Working Together 2023 can be found [here](#).

# Background to the Children's Social Care National Framework

The National Framework was issued as statutory guidance on 15th December 2023. As statutory guidance it should inform the day-to-day delivery of children's social care. It describes:

- the purpose of children's social care
- principles for practice in children's social care
- enablers that facilitate good practice and the outcomes that should be achieved for children, young people and families to thrive
- expectations for how senior leaders, practice supervisors and practitioners should support the achievement of those outcomes, including how the voices of children, young people and families should be listened to

The National Framework has 3 chapters that describe enablers of good practice:

- multi-agency working is prioritised and effective
- leaders drive conditions for effective practice
- the workforce is equipped and effective

The National Framework has 4 chapters that describe the outcomes children's social care should achieve:

- Outcome 1: children, young people and families stay together and get the help they need
- Outcome 2: children and young people are supported by their family network
- Outcome 3: children and young people are safe in and outside their homes
- Outcome 4: children in care and care leavers have stable, loving homes

The National Framework is written for those who work in and with local authority children's social care, including:

- Local authority senior leaders, practice supervisors and practitioners: should use this advice to understand what is expected of their work. It should be used in the design and delivery of services, and should underpin the interactions between

practitioners and children, young people and families. This advice should be used to reflect, learn and improve practice to achieve good outcomes.

- Safeguarding partners and relevant agencies: should read the National Framework alongside Working Together 2023. They should consider the National Framework when developing local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements in order to understand how local authorities will approach their duties and identify what is needed from partner agencies to achieve the outcomes set out in the National Framework.

The National Framework may be useful to children, young people and families as it sets out important information which may help to understand what to expect from children's social care when a local authority offers help, protection or care. It describes how practitioners listen, communicate with, and support whole families.

The National Framework was a commitment in Stable Homes, Built on Love and a draft was published for consultation in parallel. The Department for Education (DfE) also consulted on proposed indicators which will form the Children's Social Care Dashboard that will support the National Framework. Following the 14-week National Framework consultation, DfE published its consultation response to the National Framework, which set out the changes that would be made in the updated version of the National Framework, ahead of it being issued as statutory guidance.

DfE established the [National Practice Group](#), which brings together experts in practice, evidence, personal experience and multi-agency working, to help develop the National Framework. The group is chaired by Isabelle Trowler, Chief Social Worker for children and families.

## Aligning children's social care reform with statutory guidance

Working Together 2023 and the National Framework are central to setting national direction for children's social care practice and underpin government's vision for children's social care and wider safeguarding structures. The reforms in children's social care will be aligned to the guidance, including in the development of:

- Practice Guides, which will be underpinned by clear evidence standards and will help system leaders to design and commission services and interventions to support children, young people and families to achieve the outcomes of the National Framework, based on the best available evidence.
- Learning loops which will help the sector and DfE learn and improve by finding out where practice is working well, sharing strong examples of practice across local areas to help achieve the best possible outcomes for children, young people and families.
- the Pathfinder Programmes: these will take a 'test and learn' approach to understand how to operationalise, integrate and embed reforms. This approach allows government to capture live learning to understand how to achieve the best outcomes, as outlined in the National Framework and Working Together 2023.
- the Early Career Framework and social worker training and development: as these programmes are designed, they will build the knowledge and skills required for social workers to practice in line with the outcomes of the National Framework.
- the Knowledge and Skills Statement for Family Support Practitioners: as this is designed, it will help to raise the quality of practice amongst the children's social care workforce.
- Universal Standards of Care: these overarching standards, for all children who live away from home, will apply regardless of the type of setting they live in. These new standards of care will reflect the aspirations of Working Together 2023 and the National Framework at a care setting level.

## Special Educational Needs and Disabilities and Alternative Provision Reforms

Local authorities have important duties towards children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities. The Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Code of Practice sets out principles that underpin the code of practice, these principles reflect the expectations for practice described throughout the National Framework.

Through the SEND and Alternative Provision (AP) change programme, government has committed to testing the ambitious reforms set out in the SEND and AP Improvement Plan. The change programme will work with 32 local authorities and their partners in 9 regional clusters. They will test and refine the system-level reforms that will drive the culture and system changes needed to improve outcomes as defined by the Improvement plan and in alignment with Working Together 2023 the National Framework. These reforms centre on 5 areas:

- a national system underpinned by national standards.
- successful transitions and preparation for adulthood.
- a skilled workforce and excellent leadership.
- strengthened accountabilities and clear routes of redress.
- a financially sustainable system delivering improved outcomes.

More detail about these reforms, including the Law Commission review of legislation relating to disabled children, is set out in DfE's [SEND and AP improvement plan](#).



## Further Reading

There are recently issued publications, which provide context and direction for reforms in children's social care.

### Guidance:

- [Children's Social Care Dashboard and Indicator Update](#) (December 2023)
- [Championing Kinship Care: The National Kinship Care Strategy](#) (December 2023)
- [Data Strategy and Dashboard](#) (December 2023)

The information provided may also be useful for parents and carers and children and young people who are receiving support from children's social care.

### Consultations, now concluded:

- [Children's Social Care: Stable Homes, Built on Love](#)
- [Children's Social Care National Framework and Dashboard](#)
- [Child and family social worker workforce consultation](#)
- [Working Together to Safeguard Children: changes to statutory guidance](#)



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