



Department  
for Education

# **Children's Social Care National Framework**

**Statutory guidance on the purpose,  
principles for practice and expected  
outcomes of children's social care**

**March 2026**

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# Introduction

## About this guidance

Children's social care has the power to transform lives: helping families get the support they need, protecting children and young people from harm and enabling children in care and care leavers to have enduring and loving relationships can make profound, lifelong and life changing impact.

Every day, around 400,000<sup>1</sup> children are supported by local authority children's social care – that's around one child in every classroom in England. Children, young people and families deserve the highest standards of practice, from compassionate and skilled practitioners. The Children's Social Care National Framework (National Framework) sets expectations for practice and outlines a shared vision for what children's social care should achieve.

Local authorities work in partnership with other agencies, including the police, health, and education, as well as voluntary and community organisations. The outcomes within the National Framework can only be delivered when partners work effectively together. For this reason, whilst this guidance is about local authority children's social care, the responsibilities of all agencies to contribute to effective multi-agency working is reflected as the first enabler to good outcomes. The National Framework should be used by all agencies, alongside statutory guidance, Working Together to Safeguard Children (2026).

The National Framework is statutory guidance from the Department for Education and is central to setting direction for practice in children's social care. It underpins the vision for the children's social care system which will be realised through reform and the [Families First Partnership programme](#), a system which provides the right help at the right time and supports more families to stay together. The National Framework brings together the purpose of local authority children's social care, the principles by which children, young people and families should be supported, the enablers that should be in place so the system is effective, and the outcomes that should be realised so that children and young people can grow up to achieve and thrive.

## Support to embed the National Framework

Local authority practitioners, practice supervisors and senior leaders should read the accompanying document, [Improving practice with children, young people and families](#). It sets out the support available to help embed the statutory guidance Working Together to Safeguard Children, and the National Framework in practice.

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<sup>1</sup> [Children in need, Reporting year 2025 - Explore education statistics](#)

## The Children's Social Care Dashboard

The [Children's Social Care Dashboard](#) (the Dashboard) supports the National Framework by bringing children's social care data together in one place, enabling local authorities to learn and understand progress towards the outcomes and enablers set out in the National Framework. Most indicators within the Dashboard are also reflected in the [Local Outcomes Framework](#) (LOF), which sets out priority outcomes, drawing from the Missions, Plan for Change and other key areas of local spending, that are delivered at the local level and driven by local authorities as local leaders of place.

Local authorities and regions are encouraged to use the Dashboard to compare progress, share learning, and work together to drive sector-led improvement. The Dashboard is updated following new data publications. Local authorities can review their indicators regularly and use the Dashboard's introduction page and user guide to understand how to track their progress towards the National Framework's outcomes and enablers. This will help to build an up-to-date picture and consider trends over time.

[The Children's Social Care Dashboard: Supporting Information](#) is also available for further details on how the Dashboard was developed, as well as its intended use and purpose.

## Practice Guides

[Practice Guides](#) are commissioned by the Department for Education and produced by the What Works Centre for Children and Families, currently delivered by Foundations. Local authorities should look to Practice Guides for the latest evidence to help them achieve the outcomes set out in the National Framework. Practice Guides provide a high-quality deep dive into the best available evidence of 'what works' in improving service design and delivering better outcomes for children and families. The Practice Guides published as of March 2026 cover the following topics:

- [Kinship care](#)
- [Parenting through adversity \(children aged 0–10\)](#)
- [Mentoring and befriending](#)
- [Parenting disabled children and young people](#)
- [Parenting through adversity \(children and young people aged 11-18\)](#)

## Review date

The National Framework will be kept under review and updated versions will be issued as necessary.

## What is the status of this guidance?

This guidance is issued under:

- section 7 of the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970, which requires local authorities in their social services functions to act under the general guidance of the Secretary of State
- section 10(8) of the Children Act 2004, which requires each person or organisation to which the section 10 duty applies to have regard to any guidance given to them by the Secretary of State
- section 11(4) of the Children Act 2004 which requires each person or organisation to which the section 11 duty applies to have regard to any guidance given to them by the Secretary of State

It applies to all children who come into contact with children's social care up to the age of 18 years whether living with their families, in the care of the local authority, or living independently, and care leavers up to the age of 25. This document should be complied with unless exceptional circumstances arise.

When referring to 'Family Help', this guidance means both targeted early help and support and services delivered under section 17 of the Children Act 1989, which should be delivered together as a seamless offer with reduced handovers. The legislative framework (including section 17) has not changed. Local authorities will continue to have a general duty to provide support and services to children in need.

Throughout the National Framework, the term 'children's social care' refers to the local authority services that exist to:

- safeguard and promote the welfare of children in their area who, without the provision of services, are unlikely to achieve or maintain a reasonable standard of health or development, or their health or development will be significantly or further impaired, or is disabled (section 17, Children Act 1989)
- assess the needs of young carers, and whether they require support (section 17ZA, Children Act 1989)
- provide accommodation to any child in need who requires it (section 20, Children Act 1989)
- promote welfare and safeguard looked-after children and to ascertain wishes and feelings of children, parents and carers and give them due consideration in decision making (section 22, Children Act 1989)
- take steps to secure sufficient and appropriate accommodation within their area for looked-after children (Section 22G of the Children Act 1989)
- provide a range of support to a child who has left care (section 23A, 23B, 23C, Children Act 1989)

- undertake enquiries when there are concerns a child may suffer significant harm and take action to keep them safe, including taking the child into care (section 47, section 31, Children Act 1989)
- deliver services and support to looked-after children and care leavers, local authorities must have regard to the corporate parenting principles (section 1, Children and Social Work Act 2017)

Partner agencies hold important and related duties which mean they need to work collaboratively with children's social care as they commission and deliver services that support children and young people to achieve and thrive:

- Health and housing authorities have a duty to assist a local authority with enquiries where a child may be at risk of significant harm (section 47, Children Act 1989).
- In discharging their functions, health, police, education providers and childcare settings, probation, youth justice services and others must have regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children (section 10, 11, Children Act 2004).
- Health, police and local authorities, as the safeguarding partners, have a joint and equal responsibility to work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, alongside other partners (sections 16E and 16F, Children Act 2004).

## Who is this guidance for?

This guidance is written for those who work in and with local authority children's social care and contains information that may be useful to children, young people and families who receive support from children's social care.

## Children, young people and families

The National Framework sets out information which **may help children, young people and families to understand what to expect from children's social care**. It describes how practitioners listen, communicate with and support families. These groups may find this guidance particularly useful:

- Children and young people who have or have previously had a social worker, family support worker or personal adviser.
- Children with special educational needs or a disability who receive support from their local authority (e.g. under section 17, Children Act 1989 or section 2 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970). To note within the National Framework, when we refer to 'disabled children', this includes children who are neurodivergent and meet the definition of disability in the Equality Act 2010.

- Children who identify as young carers or are identified through a local authority needs assessment as young carers.
- Family and friends of children and young people who have a social worker, family support worker or personal adviser.
- Parents and carers of children and young people, including those who have had a social worker, family support worker or personal advisor, those who have had their children removed from their care, adoptive parents, kinship carers, foster carers and residential children's home staff.

Children, young people and families may be interested in a version of this guidance specifically for them. [A version for children, young people and families is available.](#)

## Local authority practitioners, practice supervisors and senior leaders

Practitioners, practice supervisors and senior leaders should use this guidance to **understand what is expected of their work with children, young people and families.** 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 guidance should be used to reflect, learn, and improve practice to achieve good outcomes.

These individuals within local authorities should read and follow this guidance (this list is alphabetical and is not exhaustive):

- Councillors, including Leaders of Councils and Lead Members for Children's Services
- Designated Social Care Officers
- Directors of Children's Services
- Family Help Lead Practitioners
- Family hub workers
- Family support workers (or equivalent)
- Heads of Service and Service Managers
- Housing and tenancy officers
- Independent reviewing officers
- Local Authority and Children's Trusts Chief Executives
- Local Authority Designated Officers
- Local Authority residential children's home managers
- Local Authority residential children's home staff
- Local Authority Special Educational Needs and Disability teams
- Local Authority youth workers

- Multi-disciplinary practitioners commissioned or employed by the local authority
- Personal advisers
- Regional Adoption Agency leaders
- Social workers - including Principal Social Workers - and practice supervisors in children's social care
- Social workers, support staff, and others working in adult social care
- Supported accommodation staff and managers
- Virtual School Heads

## Safeguarding partners and other agencies

Multi-agency working is included in the National Framework as the first enabler, and all agencies should recognise their role in achieving good outcomes for children, young people and families. Safeguarding partners<sup>2</sup> and relevant agencies<sup>3</sup> **should read the National Framework alongside Working Together to Safeguard Children (Working Together)**. They must have regard to the National Framework when developing local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, understanding how local authorities will approach their duties, and identifying what local authorities will need from partner agencies in order to adhere to guidance.

Individuals and organisations who work with local authority children's social care should read and respond to this guidance (this list is alphabetical and not exhaustive):

- Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service
- Early education and childcare settings, schools, colleges and other education providers, multi-academy trust leaders, school and college leaders, teachers, designated teachers for looked-after and previously looked-after children, designated safeguarding leads, special educational needs co-ordinators, school governors and trustees.
- Health practitioners, commissioners and providers, chief executives of integrated care boards (as lead safeguarding partners (LSPs)), their delegated safeguarding partners (DSP), named and designated professionals, paediatricians, GPs, nurses, midwives,

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<sup>2</sup> A safeguarding partner in relation to a local authority area in England is defined under the Children Act 2004 as: (a) the local authority, (b) an integrated care board for an area any part of which falls within the local authority area, and (c) the chief officer of police for an area any part of which falls within the local authority area.

<sup>3</sup> Relevant agencies are those organisations and agencies whose involvement the safeguarding partners consider are required to safeguard and promote the welfare of local children and young people. Organisations that meet these criteria are set out in Regulations: The Child Safeguarding Practice Review and Relevant Agency (England) Regulations 2018.

health visitors and school nurses, speech and language therapists, psychiatrists, psychologists, adult and child mental health workers

- Independent fostering agencies' chief executives, managers and staff
- The judiciary
- Policing, including Chief Officers of police forces (as lead safeguarding partners (LSPs)), their delegated safeguarding partners (DSPs), chief constables, chief officers, officers' support staff, Violence Reduction Units, and Police and Crime Commissioners
- Probation practitioners
- Providers of custodial establishments, including His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service staff
- Regulation 44 officers
- Residential children's home providers, managers and staff
- Voluntary, charity, and social enterprise organisations
- Youth justice practitioners
- Youth workers

# National Framework – one-page summary

## Purpose of children's social care

Children's social care exists to support children, young people and families by addressing problems early, intervening decisively when there is likelihood of harm, and to provide care for those who need it so that they grow up to achieve and thrive with safety, stability and love.

## Principles of children's social care

- Children's welfare is paramount
- Children's wishes and feelings are sought, heard, and responded to
- Children's social care works in partnership with whole families
- Children are raised by their families, with their family networks, or in family environments wherever possible
- Local authorities work with other agencies to effectively identify and meet the needs of children, young people and families
- Local authorities consider the economic and social circumstances impacting children, young people and families

## Outcomes

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

## Enablers

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

## Purpose and principles of children's social care

This chapter describes the purpose and principles of children's social care and sets the context for how each of the outcomes in the National Framework should be achieved.

### Purpose of children's social care

Children's social care exists to support children, young people and families by addressing problems early, **intervening decisively when there is likelihood of harm, and to provide care for those who need it so that they grow up to achieve and thrive with safety, stability and love.**

### Principles of children's social care

Children, young people and families, wherever they live, should be confident that local authority children's social care respects their rights and the services that they commission are delivered with consistency.

There are several principles that are cross-cutting and underpin the expectations for practice described in each chapter of the National Framework. They are drawn from, and should be considered in parallel with, legislation and statutory guidance including Working Together to Safeguard Children, as well as the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) (UNCRC).

- **Children's welfare is paramount:** decisions about help, protection and care for children must always be made in their best interests (section 22(3), Children Act 1989).
- **Children's wishes and feelings are sought, heard, and responded to:** children and young people's views should be sought and heard at every stage of support, and they should contribute to decisions made about their lives, wherever possible. Advocacy, advice, and assistance must be available to assist them in any representations they may wish to make to the authority (section 26A, Children Act 1989).
- **Children's social care works in partnership with whole families:** children, young people and families are heard, and practitioners build strong relationships with families based on respect. They acknowledge strengths within families and recognise that families, and family networks, will often have solutions to their own challenges, and that holding a focus on the whole family is often the best way of improving outcomes for children and young people.
- **Children are raised by their families, with their family networks or in family environments wherever possible:** children's social care recognises that the best place for most children to grow up is in their families, or with kinship carers (section 17(1)(b) Children Act 1989). Where children cannot safely remain with their family or within their family networks, efforts should be made to support relationships between

children and young people with their siblings, family, and friends (section 22C, Children Act 1989). When children and young people need care to be provided by the local authority, such care is safe and prioritises consistency, stability, and lifelong loving relationships with those who are important to children and young people, so that they are supported to achieve and thrive.

- **Local authorities work with other agencies to effectively identify and meet the needs of children, young people and families:** Local authorities foster strong supportive relationships with other safeguarding partners and relevant agencies, including education providers and childcare settings, to coordinate their services and to respond to the needs of children, young people and families in the round. From strategic and operational leadership to practitioners supporting individual families, safeguarding partners and relevant agencies are proactive in seeking and sharing information, knowledge, and skills with other agencies.
- **Local authorities consider the economic and social circumstances impacting children, young people and families:** Leaders and practice supervisors foster a culture of practice where the individual and protected characteristics of families are respected, and the diversity of individual needs and experiences are addressed through the support provided. Practitioners recognise the differences between, and are confident to respond to, circumstances where children experience adversity due to poverty and acute family stress, and situations where children face harm due to parental abuse and neglect. Practitioners, practice supervisors and leaders use reflective discussions so that practice is inclusive and engages all families, whatever their background and context.

## Responding to the voices of children, young people, families and their networks

Upholding these principles means working closely with children, young people, families and their networks. Outcomes are improved when practitioners develop strong relationships with whole families, including seeking and listening to the views of children and young people at every stage of support.

Every area should:

- Take a proactive, systematic approach to understanding the diverse voices, needs, and aspirations of children, young people, families and their networks. Use this information to shape individual support and the design and commissioning of services that help children and young people remain safely connected to those they know and love.
- Develop trusting relationships and support families to understand children's social care, engage early and involve wider family networks from the outset.
- Be inclusive, adaptable and evidence-informed, supporting children and young people to share their wishes and feelings freely and independently. Support them to discuss safety and wellbeing concerns and share what support would make a difference in their lives.
- Understand how to balance responsibilities to listen to the wishes and feelings of children and young people, with the need to make decisions in their best interests, including when they may not agree with the decisions that need to be made.
- Repeatedly seek additional information to make sense of the views shared by children and young people, drawing on the expertise of their wider network.
- Make sure children know how to raise concerns about their care. This includes knowing how to contact independent reviewing officers, their statutory rights to independent advocacy, where they apply and how to access them, including the local authority's complaints process.
- Provide access to independent advocacy services (including for those with communication difficulties) that meet the National Standards for the Provision of Children's Advocacy Services.
- Hold services accountable for providing respectful, quality services, and include families in the review of services to assess whether support is effective.
- Involve children, young people and families in identifying training and development needs for practitioners and carers, offering opportunities for them to shape programmes that will improve knowledge and skills.
- Have clear processes for children and young people to receive regular information about the decisions being made about their lives, so they are clear about what is

happening and why. Provide clear mechanisms for children, young people and families to raise concerns about the services they are receiving, and have their complaints addressed swiftly.

# Outcome 1: children, young people and families stay together and get the help they need

## What this outcome is about

Children are best looked after and protected within their own network of enduring, loving and caring family relationships. The core activity of children's social care is building on family strengths, providing advice and guidance, motivating families to change where indicated, using best evidence to inform skilled interventions, and the provision of specialist services.

## Expectations for practice

### Practitioners should:

- Build professional relationships with families to provide clarity of purpose, deliberate and focused interventions informed by evidence, and frequent, honest, feedback.
- Use a range of child-centred methods (observation, play, activities, creative tools) to be emotionally attuned to and build rapport and trust with children. Develop a full picture of their daily lives, unique perspectives, wishes, and needs. This should include those children who are pre-verbal, are disabled, or have additional communication needs.
- Use tools (e.g. ecomaps, genograms, chronologies) to identify key events in both adults' and children's lives, patterns of relevant relationships, gaps, intergenerational issues, and the effectiveness of previous professional interventions. Use these resources to support parents and carers to understand their histories and experiences and make sense of what influences the love and care they provide to children and young people.
- Repeatedly identify individual and collective child and family strengths, as well as their hopes and aspirations, to affect and improve the wellbeing and motivation to develop parenting capacity, offering opportunities for family group decision making at all relevant points.
- Understand that strengths and solutions are developed, nurtured and sustained through the relationship with a family. This applies to the connections within families, within communities, as well as those between families, communities and practitioners.
- Develop deep engagement with family members, remaining curious and empathetic to increase the chance of driving change in the family whilst being transparent about concerns and possible outcomes. Recognise that some may be afraid or ashamed to share information about people they know, and adapt the practice approach where previous involvement of practitioners has caused mistrust, fear or trauma (e.g. where children were repeatedly removed from birth parents).

- Apply the correct legal framework to the presenting rights and needs of the child and their family.
- Carry out a comprehensive assessment of a whole family's needs and co-create subsequent plans sensitively with children, young people, families and the wider network. These plans should be creative and explain how change can be achieved considering evidence on effective intervention.
- Use evidence to inform practice and to tailor help for children and family networks. This should include using evidence-based [Practice Guides](#) commissioned by the Department for Education, produced by the What Works Centre for Children and Families.
- Address and mitigate the impact of persistent and severe parenting stress – understanding that there is strong evidence that it increases adverse outcomes for parents, their children, and the wider family. These outcomes include increases in poor mental health, conflict in family relationships and impacts on the parent-child relationship and children's behavioural, social and emotional presentation. Provide advice and advocacy that helps families to access financial support, housing and voluntary and community resources to meet needs.
- Explore and address the reasons behind child behaviours that challenge to understand and meet children's needs - recognising that these behaviours may be a form of communication for children - and take action to help and protect children. Understand that when unaddressed, these behaviours can contribute to significant stress for parents and carers, impact on family functioning and are associated with increased economic and social pressures on families. Support parents and carers to respond confidently and effectively to these behaviours, creating boundaries for children, and utilise recommendations from [Practice Guides](#) on the best-evidenced parenting interventions.
- Recognise school attendance as a key protective factor. Understand the importance of absence as an indicator of wider need, and the potential for improving attendance to positively affect outcomes for children, young people and families. Support families to improve children's educational attendance, readiness to learn and mental or emotional wellbeing in school.
- Support high academic aspirations and achievement for children, drawing on expertise including from Virtual School Heads, designated safeguarding leads or designated teachers. Draw on evidence, including resources and toolkits from the [Education Endowment Foundation](#) (EEF) on appropriate learning theories and concepts (for example the importance of working memory, prior knowledge) to build understanding of how children learn.
- Work confidently and respectfully with children and families from diverse groups, with an active awareness that bias, discrimination, or prejudiced assumptions about

protected characteristics, cultural norms, and care experience can lead to disproportionate or insufficient levels of intervention.

- Maintain focus on delivering improved outcomes, be curious where families face barriers to change and respond swiftly to instances where a child or young person's circumstances are not improving sufficiently quickly, or where new information demonstrates that a different approach is needed to support their family and keep them safe.
- Model how to repair relationships between the practitioner and the child or family as an important opportunity to demonstrate what emotional regulation and trusted relationships look like.
- Recognise when social care intervention is no longer needed and plan for this with the child and family, demonstrating appropriate endings to relationships.

### **Practice supervisors should:**

- Support teams to make all interactions clear, honest, welcoming, purposeful and inclusive, involving whole families and their networks.
- Promote whole family approaches to assessment and intervention and encourage practitioners to reflect on relationships with and between family members or carers, offering constructive challenge, new and creative insights and advice to help decide how best to provide help and deliver change.
- Allocate families to practitioners with the requisite knowledge, skill and capacity providing frequent supervision to facilitate curiosity, learning and reflection, building on the strengths of practitioners, helping teams to address bias and navigate their professional authority with care and compassion.
- Work collaboratively with practitioners to understand the difference between agency thresholds and help practitioners navigate the system (e.g. Special Educational Needs and Disabilities; Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) to understand the parameters and different roles within the professional network.
- Consider the needs of families of disabled children, or young carers where safeguarding is not the primary reason for accessing support.
- Establish strong working relationships with Virtual School Heads in their local authority to learn from, and draw on their expertise, so that children and young people can be supported to overcome barriers to attendance and attainment. Make use of data including Regional Improvement for Standards and Excellence (RISE) attendance and attainment comparative data provided by the Department for Education.
- Guide practitioners to work creatively, explore new ideas and initiatives to solve problems, and draw on the expertise of other agencies and professions to meet the needs of children and families.

- Have oversight of families and provide constructive challenge and support to practitioners as they work with families to deliver timely and positive change. Attend to those families where there is escalating need, maintaining proportionate involvement and making sure that significant harm is quickly recognised and acted upon without any delay.
- Explore what is driving professional anxiety where indicated, listening carefully to explore hypotheses, whilst using professional expertise to reach for a shared decision on how to deliver good long-term outcomes for children.
- Support smooth transitions between teams, services and agencies to avoid duplication of effort, and achieve timely access to services throughout.

### **Senior leaders should:**

- Design services that are ambitious for the best possible outcomes for children and families and are underpinned by a local needs assessment, built by using data, evidence and appropriate learning theories. Prioritise the use of evidence-based [Practice Guides](#), to achieve National Framework outcomes.
- Recognise it is unlikely that a single intervention alone can provide a sustained and long-term solution for serious problems. Provide services which offer a range of interventions in collaboration with other sources of emotional and practical support, so families with multiple adversities are supported, improving both parent and child outcomes.
- Develop the workforce so it has the requisite principles, knowledge and skills commensurate with proportionate intervention and the complexity facing families. Draw on multi-disciplinary teams who can respond to multiple needs without having to refer elsewhere.
- Build and champion ways to strengthen family engagement in the design, commissioning and delivery of services, creating strong feedback loops to help understanding and future experience of services.
- Address the needs of children that can be overlooked, including vulnerable infants, teenagers, disabled children, young carers, children in contact with the criminal justice system, those living with families with no recourse to public funds, unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and children in care with outstanding immigration issues.
- Help families at the earliest opportunity, with services that are rooted in communities, accessible to local children, young people and families and non-stigmatising.
- Consistently promote and track children's attendance at nursery, school and college as well as patterns of exclusion across protected characteristics, being proactive where there are distinct differences in rates.
- Collaborate to develop a joined-up approach to working with adult social care services, so substance misuse, mental health and domestic abuse services are accessible, and

respond to the diverse needs of families, including where parents have one or more learning disabilities.

- Establish strong relationships with lead and delegated safeguarding partners, as well as education providers and childcare settings, so there is a common understanding of key thresholds and ways of working with children and families to promote wellbeing, encourage proportionate responses which respect private family life, and protect children from harm.
- Value the expertise of the Virtual School Head and local school leaders with success in improving attendance and attainment of vulnerable children and support them to champion improved educational outcomes for children and young people. Understand the importance of education as a protective factor, which helps to keep children and young people safe and able to access opportunities.

## **Outcome 2: children and young people are safe in and outside of their homes**

### **What this outcome is about**

Children have the right to be protected from harm and families have the right to privacy. They should receive support which focuses on their strengths, without feeling judged or stigmatised. Upholding these rights in providing support is central to effective child protection. Multi-agency responses should be swift, decisive and accurate to protect children from significant harm including abuse, neglect and exploitation. These responses should protect children at home, wherever they live, as well as from harms outside the home in their wider neighbourhood, community and online.

### **Expectations for practice**

#### **Practitioners should:**

- Have a comprehensive knowledge of Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026, as well as complementary local safeguarding procedures and the ability to apply the correct legal framework to the presenting rights and needs of the child and their families. This will include understanding the distinction between safeguarding, which includes all activity to promote the welfare of children, and child protection, which is focused on addressing the significant harm that children might experience.
- Differentiate between actual or likelihood of both impairment and significant harm, identifying too where children are experiencing multiple harms. This will include assessing the severity of the harm, the potential for sustained behaviour change considering the intent towards the child and understanding of the concern. Consider motivation for change, success of past efforts, and other protective factors (wider family network, strength of relationships).
- Integrate their help and protection roles with confidence and compassion, using professional authority to clearly convey concerns to families and agencies so everyone is clear about what needs to improve in children and young people's lives.
- Triangulate and interrogate information available and actively pursue lines of enquiry so gaps in understanding are filled. Hold multiple perspectives and hypotheses in mind to avoid confirmation bias and unsafe certainty. Share information in a way that takes into account ethical considerations and any disproportionality in its use, which may affect minority ethnic groups.
- Seek different perspectives from multiple relevant agencies and across the family network, as different people may hold different information about the same children,

who may also present differently to each of them. Sharing and connecting information is vital to spot patterns of harm.

- See children as individuals and feel confident to build relationships with young people and families. Engage in frequent and meaningful direct work and observation to communicate effectively with children and young people (including children who are not yet verbal, children with special educational needs and disabilities which affect communication, or children who do not speak English and need the help of interpreters).
- Recognise factors which may increase the likelihood of significant harm, such as different stages of child development (e.g. under-1s living with someone who has a history of violence). Be aware that certain factors may increase vulnerability (e.g. poverty, discrimination, children missing education) and understand that certain factors may also increase the likelihood of harm outside the home. Seek to understand the context in which harm is occurring, including online, considering coercion, responses to adversity and trauma, peer-on-peer abuse including teenage relationship abuse, and the impact of special educational needs and disabilities.
- Produce plans tailored to individual needs, which have a realistic chance of success. Co-create plans sensitively with children, young people, families and their wider network. Use plans to explain what needs to change around the specific child to improve their outcomes and explain how change can best be achieved in each family and network, considering best evidence on effective intervention.
- When planning assessment and intervention, consider that the involvement of the state in private family life can heighten tensions within families, particularly when significant harm has been previously hidden or when its secrecy is threatened. Take into account that individuals experiencing stress, fear or limited capacity from domestic abuse (including coercive control), substance misuse, mental ill-health, or learning disabilities often need persistent, empathic and authoritative approaches to absorb concerns and to understand what they need to do. Consider that parenting capacity can change over time, can be impacted by stress, environmental or vulnerability factors as well as the behaviours of others.
- Judge the significance of the role and background of any adults and children in contact with the child and family, taking into account their individual histories, any serious criminal convictions, previous allegations of child abuse, domestic abuse, violent behaviour, restrictions on contact with children or involvement with children subject to child protection plans or care proceedings.
- When a child is a victim of exploitation, explore the harm they have suffered, the nature of constrained choice, including survival choices, and how discrimination and negative stereotypes can lead to assumptions about blame and responsibility. Understand that children may not always recognise their experiences as exploitation.

- Assess actual or likely significant harm through an anti-racist, anti-discriminatory and culturally aware lens, applying knowledge of faith, beliefs and family cultures that can positively and negatively impact on children, whilst maintaining a core focus on the safety and wellbeing of the child.
- Provide a forensic analysis of parenting capacity, distinguishing between fact, inference and assumption, the weight given to different forms of evidence in understanding family context, identifying gaps in information and uncertainties in the analysis. Consider the impact of disabilities on the parent and child relationship.
- Recognise that change is non-linear and parents may experience setbacks, including relapses in substance misuse, deterioration in mental health, or new incidents of domestic abuse. Understand that this does not always mean long-term progress is unlikely. Plan for these possibilities with realistic contingencies that prioritise the child's long-term needs, avoiding both risk-aversion and over-optimism. Ensure that families' networks understand potential triggers, stressors and transition points, and know how to respond if challenges re-emerge.
- Use the Public Law Outline effectively and only when necessary, helping families understand its purpose. Explore all other options first, where this is in the child's best interests.
- Uphold corporate parenting responsibilities, building strong relationships with children in care, understanding their lives and being alert to situations where they may be vulnerable. Recognise that children in care can experience abuse, neglect and exploitation, including when they are being cared for by the local authority. This includes being vulnerable to harms including criminal exploitation, sexual exploitation, trafficking, violence, missing episodes and harms online. Work with carers and partner agencies to increase safety and address harm, and if children in care go missing, prioritise an effective multi-agency response.
- Recognise that in situations of coercive control, domestic abuse and sexual offending, attempts to drive change in families can increase risk of harm to children; and that practitioners themselves can also be coercively controlled by abusive adults.
- Respond to situations where children are involved in harm towards others and remember that first and foremost, they are children in need of help and protection and that parents, carers and the family networks are partners who can protect children when they are facing harm outside of the home, wherever it is safe to do so.
- Recognise the value for children and young people of strong relationships with friends and family networks, and support them to build relationships, to develop a sense of community, respect and belonging.
- Act as advocates for the children and young people they are supporting, so that services can meet their needs. Recognise the potential for children and young people to be blamed, criminalised, or have needs ignored because of the harms they are experiencing or are involved in and remain curious about what is driving behaviour.

This will include recognising factors which make children particularly vulnerable to criminal exploitation and at greater risk of later involvement with the criminal justice system, and work with partners to identify appropriate support.

### **Practice supervisors should:**

- Recognise the uncertainty in protecting children, supporting practitioners and other agencies to explore and manage anxiety and deliver proportionate interventions to increase safety.
- Build strong relationships with other organisations to facilitate and support the sharing and analysis of information between partner agencies. Recognise the limits to their own and practitioners' knowledge and skills. Provide appropriate support and encourage critical and respectful challenge within teams and across agencies, seeking external expertise when needed.
- Oversee robust investigations into significant harm, addressing bias and taking decisive and rapid action to keep children safe.
- Remain mindful of the impact of child protection enquiries on families and initiate enquiries only when necessary.
- Work with peers and their teams to assign practitioners with the right skills and deploy qualified social workers to protect children and young people from harm.
- Help practitioners identify when the Public Law Outline is needed, supporting decisions that are timely and effective. Escalation from a child protection plan to pre-proceedings only takes place after all other reasonable options have been explored and where it is in the child's best interests.
- Recognise the value of working collaboratively with partners to meet the needs of children and young people. Be proactive in identifying and building relationships with local charities, social enterprise and voluntary organisations, youth justice services, and colleagues working in education providers and childcare settings, health, police and adult social care. This includes identifying actions to create safety for children and young people wherever they spend their time, including in their community and online.

### **Senior leaders should:**

- Maintain awareness of practice quality and create a culture determined to protect children while recognising the uncertainty and complexity of child protection work. Support the workforce to navigate this complexity, to understand and identify what constitutes significant harm and make decisions to intervene effectively and increase safety.
- Model strong, compassionate, and collaborative relationships within their organisation and with partner agencies to meet the needs of children experiencing harm.

- Support critical and respectful challenge and openness across their organisation and with other agencies, promoting shared learning and robust plans to protect children and young people from harm.
- Provide an effective framework to oversee robust investigations where there are concerns about abuse, neglect and exploitation. Be confident that there is decisive and rapid action to keep children and young people safe.
- Organise services so that decisions are led by experienced practitioners and responses protect children and young people from harm and address the context in which harm is taking place.
- Establish clear processes for sharing information and data across safeguarding partners and relevant partner agencies, including education providers and childcare settings.
- Be diligent and determined to prevent circumstances where children in care could experience harm. They take rapid action where there is a likelihood of harm, so children and young people are protected. They review commissioned services and work in partnership with other agencies to protect children in their care and share learning so that practice can continually improve.
- Encourage a culture of curiosity, sharing learning and reflection so that the organisation and individuals can improve practice. They focus on learning and system improvement rather than blaming staff after serious incidents.
- Understand the changing nature of harms and support the workforce to identify and address new and emerging forms of harm, including online harms. Support practitioners to reflect on the factors that might identify victims and perpetrators, and where expertise from multi-agency partners is needed.
- Help facilitate with partner agencies an understanding of significant harm and how that manifests in children's lives both inside family homes and outside in communities.
- Identify and address patterns of discrimination, and the factors contributing to it, where some groups of children and families, for example those from minority ethnic backgrounds, are over or under-represented in service responses. Leaders use relationships built collaboratively with partners to create safe places and streamline local services to avoid unnecessary duplication.

## **Outcome 3: children and young people are supported by their family network**

### **What this outcome is about**

Extended family networks, friends and community connections provide essential support to children and their parents. Building on these strengths helps children, young people and families create networks that provide safety, stability, and love. This support can enable children to remain living within their birth families, and when this is not possible, allows them to grow up with kinship carers as part of an extended family network, surrounded by lifelong, loving relationships. For all children and young people, including those in care or leaving care, building family networks and trusted relationships should always remain central to planning and intervention.

### **Expectations for practice**

#### **Practitioners should:**

- Bring the family network together to explore safe and loving family-led options for the child's care before the local authority issues care proceedings, wherever safe and possible.
- Seek out and build relationships with members of the extended family network and connected people, including parents whose children do not live with them. Use their care and knowledge to address concerns, enhance relationships and support decision-making.
- Build trust and familiarity with family networks through active listening; showing empathy; being prepared; and taking time to build genuine relationships with carers and children. Promote positive relationships through interactions which are consistent and intensive.
- Understand that sometimes poor past experiences of statutory services based on family history and wider discrimination can impact on engagement. Perseverance and respect are key to encouraging engagement.
- Value the insight of family members and support networks, seek out their views and take appropriate action to respond to any concerns they might raise about the support and care that is provided to themselves or to children.
- Pay particular attention to building and strengthening family networks where they are limited or where they do not yet exist. Identify family members and support networks that might ordinarily be overlooked as important sources of care and support, challenging their own views about the type of support available. This may include non-

familial relationships - lifelong friends, youth workers, teachers and members of community or faith-based organisations.

- Be mindful of how family dynamics can change and remain alert to new information that would improve understanding of the relationships within the family network, including indications that children may need protecting from harm.
- Identify complex dynamics, and work sensitively and constructively to help families build, strengthen, repair, or manage their relationships. This will include equipping parents with practical strategies while strengthening the whole family system, including help to facilitate constructive family time between children, siblings, parents, carers, and other family members.
- Be knowledgeable about local services, listen to and recognise specific family situations and challenges. Interventions which can adapt to an individual's needs are strongly preferred by kinship carers and may help strengthen a sense of agency and empowerment.
- Be strengths-based and solution-focused, demonstrate commitment to supporting kinship arrangements including making referrals to support services, navigating eligibility for financial support, and signposting to peer support to navigate systems and services.
- Consider every possible option for safe reunification, recognising that families will need support to rebuild relationships and align different needs and expectations, accessing therapeutic support where indicated to address experiences of adversity and trauma. Evaluate all possible opportunities to reunite children with family overseas who could offer a safe and stable home.
- Facilitate family group decision making in a thoughtfully and carefully prepared way, informed by the [Families First Partnership programme guide](#), enabling families to respond to concerns about a child's safety or wellbeing. Be mindful of circumstances where a child is not able to be supported by their immediate family network, for example where it is unsafe to maintain relationships, such as in cases of child sexual abuse, or when a child or young person's family and network are in another country or at a distance.

### **Practice supervisors should:**

- Promote the kinship local offer and help practitioners and families to navigate the offer, providing access to the relevant information, advice and resources where needed.
- Encourage the use of shared forums to inform plans to meet children and young people's needs, making use of family group decision making, to bring together information and resources for families at the right time.

- Proactively support practitioners to challenge themselves on their assumptions about capacity of extended families to help, including relationships which may be hidden, weak, ruptured or not yet built.
- Champion reunification of children from care to their families and family networks including those who live overseas - this may be a gradual and long-term process.
- Help practitioners navigate legal, geographical or financial complexities which may be perceived as barriers to keeping children within their family networks, but which, with some creativity and perseverance, could create lifelong connections for children.
- Retain focus on complex circumstances and the critical importance of building and maintaining relationships through difficult and protracted periods of time, for example, where unaccompanied asylum-seeking children may not have a family network in the country, where a child's parent or carer is in prison, or where the child is in custody themselves.

### Senior leaders should:

- Embed a culture of 'family first' in the local practice system, including a relentless focus on building and creating lifelong networks of support for children, and the role of reunification. As part of this, consider how to support disabled children with the help of their family network.
- Make family group decision making the bedrock of practice, informed by the [Families First Partnership programme guide](#). Design services so that there is sufficient knowledge, skill and capacity amongst practitioners to facilitate these interventions effectively and according to best evidence.
- Prioritise supporting formal and informal kinship care arrangements where safe, and in the child's best interests to do so, to avoid children and young people unnecessarily entering care. Publish a kinship local offer setting out the approach towards promoting and supporting the needs of children in kinship care in the area. This should include a named responsible manager for kinship care within the local authority who will oversee the policy and support join-up across children's services.
- Recognise that some kinship families have had negative experiences of statutory services in the past, and so sometimes prefer to receive support through non-statutory services. Understand it may be helpful to provide separate, specialist support to help address barriers to access.
- Support kinship families, including those from minority ethnic backgrounds, to be proactively involved by both local authorities and voluntary sector organisations in the co-design of local interventions. When developing supportive interventions, local authorities, voluntary and community organisations use iterative processes for testing interventions and kinship families are invited to give feedback. Feedback is used to refine interventions.

- Offer support that is flexible and reflects the needs of the kinship families that practitioners are working with, as no specific setting or way of delivering support is proven to be more effective. Understand that effective interventions can be delivered in a range of settings, including home visits and in-person meetings, in community settings, and online, virtual, and telephone engagement.
- Produce proactive communications and engagement activity to raise awareness of local services through the local authority and the voluntary and community sector to enable potential and existing kinship families to understand what support services they are entitled to, and what broader family help is available in their area.
- Use available funding to provide dedicated kinship family support workers or case workers with social work training and training in specific interventions as set out in [Practice Guides](#).
- Use available funding flexibly so that, when it is in the child's best interests, members of the family network and kinship carers can access the right support, without needing to become foster carers.

## **Outcome 4: children in care and care leavers have stable, loving homes**

### **What this outcome is about**

Children and young people are best looked after and protected by a network of enduring and caring family relationships. Where these relationships are disrupted, the best protective factor for children is to rebuild or create new relationships. When children cannot live with their parents or caregivers and the state steps in to take care of them, or when children have arrived in England as unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, it is crucial that love, care, protection, and stability are provided to support children's ongoing development and future life chances.

The care that children receive helps to address experiences of adversity and trauma and gives them the foundations for a healthy, happy life, along with the networks of loving relationships that will continue to provide support as children leave care and move towards early adulthood. Achieving positive outcomes for care leavers starts with effective support for children and young people while they are in care - this is why the National Framework has one outcome for both children in care and care leavers.

### **Expectations for practice**

#### **Practitioners should:**

- Facilitate family group decision making to identify safe, loving homes for children who cannot live with their own immediate family, keeping siblings together where possible and maintaining proximity to family and networks.
- Look to place children in homes that offer an experience of family, only using residential care when it is the most appropriate placement for the child or young person and only using supported accommodation when it is the best option to meet the needs of young people who seek, and are ready, for more independence as they approach adulthood.
- Help children to nurture lifelong, loving relationships with family and friends (including siblings, birth parents and former carers) and use their care, knowledge and expertise to address concerns, enhance relationships and improve decision-making. This will include working with staff in residential children's homes and supported accommodation as well as supporting foster carers, kinship carers and adopters to enable children to maintain relationships with their family and networks. Where family networks are absent, help children build meaningful social networks through peer and community connections.

- Provide delegated authority to support foster and kinship carers to feel empowered and respected to take decisions that parents usually take as part of daily family life. Make use of the insights of kinship carers, foster carers, residential children's home staff and supported accommodation providers to inform plans and decisions for children and young people.
- Undertake verbal and written life-story work so children have an accurate understanding of their story and its impact, aligned to their developmental needs.
- Show care by remembering and valuing the child's perspective, building and sharing memories, remembering important dates, times and the child's likes or dislikes.
- Help children access the health and education services they need, drawing on the expertise of Virtual School Heads and designated nurses and teachers, to improve their attendance, attainment and health. Provide useful information about, for example, advocacy services, independent visitor schemes, family-finding or mentoring and befriending, and children in care councils<sup>4</sup>.
- Where necessary, support children to access specialist immigration legal advice at the earliest opportunity with the aim of resolving their immigration status before the age of 18.
- Support children to settle and bond with carers and adoptive parents and be responsive to those families who struggle. Recognise that parents will need help and guidance and children are likely to need therapeutic support at different points in their lives, including when they move into young adulthood and, for some, parenthood.
- Quickly address allegations made against carers, taking action to protect children and carefully considering the impact of decisions, including the possible ending of placements. Sensitively guide and support carers through allegations, regularly sharing available and appropriate information with both those subject to the allegation and those investigating. Advocate for swift and fair resolutions, so that children and carers are not left with unnecessary uncertainty.
- Consider deprivation of liberty only as a last resort; work with supervisors to plan alternatives and step-down arrangements.
- Where necessary, support children in custody through relevant care planning, placement and case review responsibilities through careful coordination between agencies. This should include plans for visits to looked-after children in custody in line with statutory interval.

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<sup>4</sup> [Mentoring and Befriending Practice Guide - Foundations](#)

## Support for care leavers:

- Help care leavers to build and sustain loving relationships with family and friends, including through access to family-finding, advocacy, peer support, mentoring and befriending.
- Support care leavers to live in safe, suitable accommodation, including accessing Staying Put or Staying Close (where available) and supported lodgings, with every effort made to prevent homelessness.
- Use their knowledge, skills, and experience to respond to mental ill-health, and support care leavers so that they can readily access health services.
- Support care leavers to access and progress in education, employment, and training, thinking positively about their options for education and work once they leave school. Help young people to understand how post-16 education and work interact with immigration status, and any disability-related support available. Work with Jobcentres and employers to help young people to consider the full range of options available to them, identify and apply for appropriate opportunities, including schemes designed for care leavers such as those available through organisations signed up to the [Care Leaver Covenant](#).
- Help care leavers, including those who are former unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, to access support to resolve immigration decisions and access to wider services, including in cases where they have no recourse to public funds.
- Maintain regular contact with care leavers in custody, including by visiting them in person. Consider an appropriate and regular financial allowance and consider freezing entitlements to financial support (such as the setting up home grant) for the duration of their period in custody, so that these allowances can be available on their release.

## Practice supervisors should:

- Be ambitious for children in care and care leavers and motivate their teams to advocate for the best opportunities and outcomes, addressing complacency swiftly to maintain the highest standards of support.
- Know the quality of the practice they oversee and set a culture where practitioners know each child and young person, understand their needs and interests, and design individualised support for their health and wellbeing, including disabled children and young people. This culture should also support long term planning for longer term outcomes.
- Champion lifelong loving relationships with family and friends, prompting creative approaches to build and strengthen connections. Use local authority resources effectively to secure loving family-based homes near safe family networks.
- Create expectations that help to build a culture where all carers are included in key meetings and decisions, empowering carers to take day to day decisions for children.

Support practitioners to explore all options for reunification of children and young people, providing creative ideas, constructive challenge and advice to practitioners to overcome identified barriers.

- Support teams to understand the rights of children and young people, helping practitioners to uphold them and check that all legal duties towards children, carers and parents are met.
- Encourage practitioners working with youth justice services to support children throughout their period in custody, and in preparation for release, emphasising that all children on remand are considered looked after, and the same duties apply.
- Develop practical, multi-agency approaches to avoid deprivation of liberty orders and consider the child's experience to develop personalised plans. Where deprivation of liberty is unavoidable, identify step-down arrangements.
- Understand the needs of migrant children, including unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, and support practitioners to provide services for them, so children and young people can access the support they need, including early access to legal representation with the aim of resolving their immigration status before they turn 18, so they have clarity about their future when they leave care.
- Work with Virtual School Heads and designated teachers to promote attendance and attainment, advocating for school placements, and challenging exclusions where appropriate.

### **Support for care leavers:**

- Manage effective planning and decision-making for children and young people as they approach and transition to adulthood, allowing sufficient time for plans to be developed and implemented before a child turns 18, or 25 in the case of a disabled child or young person. Liaise and partner effectively with adult social care so that assessments are completed in a timely manner and care leavers can continue to access appropriate support.
- As part of transition planning for care leavers, partner with housing services to develop suitable accommodation options and avoid care leavers becoming homeless.
- Build relationships with local health services to help them understand the needs of this cohort and increase access to health support for care leavers.
- Support the development of bespoke pathways for care leavers that allow them to access education, employment and training, helping them to realise their ambitions for their own futures, including by working with Jobcentres and employers.
- Recognise the needs of care leavers, including those who are former unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, and provide support to resolve their immigration status and potential future pathway.

- Work collaboratively with HM Prison and Probation Service to facilitate support for care leavers in prison and under probation supervision.

### **Senior leaders should:**

- Champion corporate parenting, drawing on services and partner agencies, creating a culture where everyone is ambitious to be the best 'parent' for children in care and care leavers.
- Lead sufficiency planning so children's diverse needs can be met within registered placements within their area, working with other local authorities towards Regional Care Cooperatives, and that there is maximum value for money in commissioning arrangements.
- Drive forward delivery of the sufficiency strategy by designing services with integrated care boards, the Youth Custody Service and youth justice services so that appropriate services and provision for children in complex situations with multiple needs can be jointly commissioned and funded.
- Direct services to find permanent loving families for children as quickly as possible where long-term fostering, or adoption, is the right permanence option. Work with the regional fostering recruitment and retention hub to recruit foster carers who are able to meet the needs of the local population. Work with Regional Adoption Agencies to actively remove barriers to adoption, including addressing unnecessary bureaucracy in matching and recruiting sufficient adopters from diverse backgrounds.
- Prioritise making sure that children and young people can live and stay in a home that meets their needs as long as possible, remaining close to, and connected, with their family network. This includes supporting children and young people to remain at their school, or if this is not possible, making decisions about school places ahead of moving.
- Build teams which have the required multi-disciplinary capacity, knowledge and skill to meet the diverse needs of children in care and care leavers. This will include the provision of family group decision making as routine practice and making advocacy services readily available.
- Promote reunification with family and family networks for children and young people, wherever it is safe and in their best interests.
- Support creative practice to avoid deprivation of liberty, ensuring the least restrictive means possible, for the shortest time possible, where secure care is the only option.
- Hold a comprehensive and contemporary view of the quality of local practice, taking timely and proactive steps to address areas for improvement based on robust evidence.
- Seek to reduce delays in family court proceedings where this is within the local authority's gift.

- Proactively provide strategic leadership so unaccompanied asylum-seeking children receive safe support, care, and accommodation, and work collaboratively with peers in other areas to meet the needs of these children. Commission appropriate services, including for their transition out of care.
- Notify other local authorities when children are moved to their area, when this is the most appropriate placement for the child, and it is consistent with their care plan. Where children are moved out of area, retain clear visibility of those children so that appropriate love, care, protection, education and support remain in place. Take account of the increased vulnerability which out of area placements can create, particularly where there are existing factors which increase children's vulnerabilities, such as for disabled children, children who are at risk of, or subject to, a deprivation of liberty order.

### **Support for care leavers:**

- Commission and direct services that prioritise care leavers' voices and needs, so they are prepared for independent living with timely adult social care assessments, strong relationships, and networks of support in place.
- Design services that reflect the needs of care leavers, including former unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, so that they are supported in the transition to adulthood, including resolving their immigration status.
- Work with housing partners to secure a wide range of safe, suitable accommodation options. This could include giving care leavers priority for social housing and the use of rent guarantor schemes to support care leavers to access private rented accommodation.
- Build and maintain strong relationships with health services so care leavers can access help when they need it. Use the resources they have available to tackle disparities in the physical and mental health outcomes of care leavers.
- Champion opportunities for care leavers in education, training, and employment, collaborating with Jobcentres and local partners to remove barriers.

## Enabler: multi-agency working is prioritised and effective

### What this enabler is about

Local authorities, police, health, and other relevant agencies, including early years, education providers and childcare settings, criminal justice partners and voluntary organisations, have responsibilities to work together to protect children and give families the help they need. Multi-agency working is at the heart of effective support for children and families, and is part of the legislative and regulatory frameworks for protecting children. [Working Together to Safeguard Children](#) (Working Together) sets out how safeguarding partners and relevant agencies should work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Local authorities can only fully achieve the outcomes of the National Framework with the full cooperation of other organisations through effective multi-agency working.

### How this enabler is supported in practice

All organisations, including safeguarding partners and relevant agencies, should use the National Framework to:

- raise aspirations for what high-quality, evidence-informed support and practice with children, young people and families can achieve
- establish a shared approach and strong relationships across agencies, so everyone can engage constructively in delivering effective support to children, young people and families
- embed voices of children, young people and families in the design and delivery of services and support
- determine the right support, challenge, and accountability across agencies so that everyone can work towards the goal of seeing families thrive, and understand the impact of their services in helping to deliver that ambition

### Following the National Framework alongside Working Together to Safeguard Children

Working Together includes multi-agency expectations for strategic leaders, senior or middle managers and for those involved in direct practice. Multi-agency practice expectations apply to all agencies and practitioners involved in supporting children and young people. The practice expectations are organised around 5 key principles: to **collaborate**, to **learn**, to **resource**, to **include**, and to **mutually challenge**. They set out

how safeguarding partners and other agencies should work together and align their practice, including towards the outcomes in the National Framework.

## **Following the National Framework alongside the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Code of Practice**

Local authorities must deliver their responsibilities, with a view to integrating education, training and health and social care, where this would improve the overall quality of provision for children and young people with SEND.

The SEND Code of Practice statutory guidance and section 26 of the Children and Families Act (2014) set out that local authorities and integrated care boards (ICBs) must make joint commissioning arrangements for education, health and care provision, informed by a clear assessment of local needs. This multi-agency collaboration ensures that there is a joined-up approach that prioritises identification, assessment, and support.

[The SEND Code of Practice](#) states that local authorities, in carrying out their functions, must have regard to:

- the views, wishes and feelings of the child or young person and the child's parents
- the importance of the child or young person, and the child's parents, participating as fully as possible in decisions and being provided with the information and support necessary to enable participation in those decisions
- the need to support the child or young person, and the child's parents in order to facilitate the development of the child or young person and to help them achieve the best possible educational and other outcomes, preparing them effectively for adulthood

These principles reflect the expectations for practice described throughout the National Framework, which see the voices of children, young people and families as central to improving outcomes.

Local authorities will only achieve the outcomes in the National Framework for children with SEND with the knowledge, expertise and support of other organisations.

# Enabler: leaders drive conditions for effective practice

## What this enabler is about

Leadership is the core enabler of effective practice. All leaders from local authorities and children's trusts, including Chief Executives, Directors of Children's Services, Directors of Public Health, and Lead Members for Children's Services, should conduct their responsibilities in ways that support and empower the wider children's social care workforce to achieve the best possible outcomes for children and families. Leaders can transform the communities that they work in. This requires passion, commitment, knowledge, skills, and expertise at all levels of leadership within and across multi-agency partnerships. Leaders at every level should model the strong relationships they want to see between practitioners, and children and families.

## Expectations for practice

### Practitioners should:

- Work with children, young people and families in a way which aligns with the principles of children's social care set out in the National Framework.
- Recognise they can demonstrate leadership in their roles and act as leaders for their colleagues. They use their knowledge and skills to contribute to the culture of practice and improve support for children, young people and families.
- Share feedback to help leaders to improve the culture in which they practice. Be strong advocates for high standards of practice amongst the workforce and for support for children, young people and families that meet their needs.
- Confidently raise issues and concerns with senior leaders and practice supervisors to identify improvements needed in how services are being delivered, including improvements to anti-discriminatory practice.
- Provide contextual information about families they are working with to help leaders understand data, support internal quality assurance processes and identify how to change and improve practice.

### Practice supervisors should:

- Promote and govern practice within their organisation, setting high standards for practice, supporting and encouraging others to do the same. Embed the principles of children's social care set out in the National Framework within their teams and discuss where those principles are not being met in practice.

- Recognise their influence as leaders of practice and take responsibility for contributing to an inclusive workplace culture. Develop a culture of learning and improvement, where feedback is shared with senior leaders and staff are sufficiently supported, stretched and mentored to reach their aspirations.
- Shape and influence the culture of practice by providing a safe and calm environment for all staff, using resources effectively. Promote reflective thinking and methods, give practitioners time to learn, observe and analyse their practice, supporting effective discussions between practitioners and other agencies.
- Promote professional knowledge of anti-discriminatory practice and assist practitioners to be equipped to explore the meaning of differences and similarities between themselves and the family they are working with.

### **Senior leaders should:**

- Have a deep knowledge of their local area and a strong understanding of the diverse needs of children and families. This will include how differences and similarities within and between communities impact access to services and how successful engagement should be shaped by this information.
- Create an ambitious vision and operational design for local services which closely aligns with the National Framework. This should facilitate a shared understanding of outcomes for children and families, and how to achieve these across the workforce, commissioned services, and with safeguarding partners and relevant agencies.
- Leaders prioritise funding and resources that help families early so children and young people can achieve and thrive. Funding achieves value for money and is spent on interventions that make a difference to children, young people and families.
- Prioritise the use of the best available evidence, including [Practice Guides](#), to inform decisions on service design, secure the strongest chance of achieving both the outcomes of the National Framework and value for public money.
- Effectively use and contribute data to the Children's Social Care Dashboard to remain transparent and accountable for achieving the outcomes of the National Framework. This will include tracking performance and the impact of practice on children and families, comparing performance with statistical and regional neighbours, and seeking advice and support to drive further improvements.
- Develop effective feedback loops across children's social care, the local authority, partner organisations and local children and families, to test and refine service responses, maximise resource and opportunity for further change.
- Stay close to practice, participating in decision making about children and families, modelling deep thinking about how best to help families in creative ways which result in families staying together. Challenge own and others' thinking, taking account of bias and embedding practice which is anti-discriminatory throughout the organisation.

- Be tenacious in the approach to driving change towards implementation of the National Framework and resolute in providing the conditions for effective practice. This will include limiting the impact of the bureaucratic burden on practitioners and maximising the focus on direct change work taking place with families.
- Carefully manage the impact of any systems change with a sustained focus on the experience of children and families. This may include preparing the workforce for any changes in relevant guidance and legislation.
- Be visible and model integrity, care, compassion and creativity in decision making, offering clarity of purpose for their teams, organisation and with partner agencies.
- Model effective advocacy for children and families throughout the organisation and across partner agencies, setting high expectations of practitioners and partnerships, celebrating excellent practice at every opportunity.
- Hold colleagues to account at every level of the organisation, within commissioned services and across partnerships, when there are concerns about delivery timeliness and quality of practice.
- Apply up-to-date knowledge of the relevant legal, regulatory, procedural and performance frameworks and confidently support practitioners to navigate complex decisions within these frameworks.
- Demonstrate a high level of resilience within pressured environments and respond to situations in calm, measured and pragmatic ways.

## **Enabler: the workforce is equipped and effective**

### **What this enabler is about**

Practitioners play a powerful role in the lives of families. There is a wide range of staff who make up the children's social care workforce, and each can be invaluable in helping children and families thrive. Practitioners use their expertise to offer compassionate and motivational support that addresses the challenges families face. The diversity of practitioners working within children's social care provides an essential set of skills, with the workforce at its strongest when there is positive, collaborative work across different disciplines. Practice can be demanding, complex and emotive, which means that leaders at every level of their organisation need to be aligned in their efforts to cultivate the context in which the workforce is skilled, supported and continuously learning.

### **Expectations for practice**

#### **Practitioners should:**

- Prioritise family visits and direct work to build strong, respectful relationships with children, young people and families. They confidently identify children and young people's needs in circumstances that can involve risk, complexity and uncertainty.
- Use supervision to reflect on their practice and prioritise their learning and development using the latest evidence from the sector, so they have the knowledge, skills and experience needed for their roles.
- Be committed to managing their practice so it is impactful. They are goal-oriented and use research and evidence to support children, young people and families in a way that is purposeful and effective.
- Address discrimination and promote equality, working with children and families in ways that consider how different experiences may affect how individuals engage with children's social care. Consider how their own experiences and biases affect their work with families and utilise supervision effectively to address their own feelings about practice.

#### **Practice supervisors should:**

- Understand their role in shaping and supporting the workforce to respond to the complex realities of practice. They respect the expertise of practitioners and prioritise consistency of practitioners for families.
- Actively promote and encourage direct work with children and families, including in their own roles. They help practitioners to prioritise family visits and support

practitioners to analyse direct work to think about the impact of their practice on families.

- Support their teams to address discrimination and promote equality. They are mindful of the needs of their local area, emerging research and evidence, including [Practice Guides](#), and the perspectives of local families.
- Encourage practitioners to continue learning throughout their career and model dedication to their own practice development, including using practice observations, reflection, and feedback.
- Help practitioners to adopt an approach to practice which is responsive and proportionate to identified need and harm. They use supervision processes to challenge the balance of authoritative intervention and collaborative engagement.
- Support their teams by sharing information between leaders and practitioners about the needs of both the workforce and the families they work with.

### **Senior leaders should:**

- Consider their workforce as the greatest asset, ensuring workload is reasonable for practitioners and that services are structured with optimum spans of control for supervisors and other managers.
- Nurture a culture of learning and improvement, where staff are sufficiently supported, stretched, and mentored to meet their aspirations, securing the time and space for teams to develop, observe the practice of others and reflect on what went well and what could be improved.
- Shape and influence the culture of practice by providing a safe, calm, and well-ordered environment for all staff. Use resources to best effect and facilitate reflective thinking and methods for multidisciplinary formulation and decision making.
- Match the best evidence with the knowledge and skills needed so that the multidisciplinary workforce is sophisticated enough to match the complexity of the needs of children and families.
- Commission services and recruit staff with the knowledge and skills to deliver the outcomes set out in the National Framework. Invest in practitioner training, development, and wellbeing in line with the [early career standards for child and family social workers](#) and other relevant professional development frameworks, including locally determined standards for alternatively qualified staff.
- Consider the diversity of the workforce, taking proactive steps to address disparities across the hierarchy and to build a workforce that reflects the local demographics of the area.

- Provide a stable and permanent workforce and only employ agency social workers as a temporary measure when necessary, so that children and families can maintain consistent relationships with practitioners.
- Remove unnecessary bureaucracy from the practice system and have in place sufficient technology and administrative support to meet data collection and recording requirements, privileging practitioner time for direct work with families.
- Address the over and under representation of particular groups of children and families at particular points in the system, interrogating assessment and decision making to identify, for example, racial bias in public care applications to court, Section 47 enquiries or child protection plans.
- Have clear processes to hear, and respond to, the concerns of the workforce, as well as for whistleblowing.

## Glossary of terms

**Abuse** – A form of maltreatment of a child or young person. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Harm can include ill treatment that is not physical as well as the impact of witnessing ill treatment of others.

This can be particularly relevant, for example, in relation to the impact on children of all forms of domestic abuse, including physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional and psychological abuse, coercive and controlling behaviour and economic or financial abuse, where they see, hear, or experience its effects.

Children may be abused in a family or in institutional or extra-familial contexts by those known to them or, more rarely, by others. Abuse can take place wholly online, or technology may be used to facilitate offline abuse. Children may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child or children.

**Care proceedings** – When a local authority needs to get involved with a family to keep a child safe, they may initiate court proceedings, known as care proceedings.

**Child in need** – defined in section 17 of the Children Act 1989 as a child who is unlikely to reach or maintain a satisfactory level of health or development, or their health or development will be significantly impaired without the provision of children’s social care services, or the child is disabled.

**Child in need plan** – Child in need plans set out the support to be provided to a child in need and their family by children’s services.

**Child protection** – Part of safeguarding and promoting welfare. This refers to the activity that is undertaken to protect specific children who are suffering, or are likely to suffer, significant harm.

**Children and young people** – In the National Framework the term ‘children and young people’ refers to people under the age of 18 or 25. A child is anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday. The fact that a child has reached 16 years of age, is living independently or is in further education, is a member of the armed forces, is in hospital or in custody in the secure estate, does not change their status or entitlements to services or protection.

**Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass) Guardian** – When working with children in respect of public law legal proceedings, the Cafcass worker is known as a children’s guardian. The guardian’s most important role is to make sure that local authority arrangements and decisions for and about children protect them, promote their welfare and are in their best interests.

**Children in care** – In the National Framework the term ‘children in care’ refers to all children whose care is being provided by the local authority. Legislation uses the term ‘looked-after children’ to refer to children who are being cared for by the local authority, whether that is under section 20, or sections 22 and 31 of the Children Act 1989. Legally, the language of ‘children in care’ does not include children accommodated and looked after under section 20. However, children and young people often tell local and central government that the term ‘looked-after children’ is unhelpful, and we have made the deliberate choice to use ‘children in care’ throughout the National Framework to refer to all children, regardless of the legal provision under which they are being cared for by the local authority.

**Children’s homes** – The Care Standards Act 2000 provides that ‘an establishment is a children’s home... if it provides care and accommodation wholly or mainly for children’.

**Children’s social care** – Children’s social care exists to support children, young people and families, to protect children and young people by intervening decisively when they are at risk of harm and to provide care for those who need it so that they grow up and thrive with safety, stability and love.

**Corporate parent** – The term is used to describe the local authority who has responsibilities to support looked-after children and care leavers in a way that other children are supported by their parents. Corporate parenting principles are set out in the [Children and Social Work Act 2017](#).

**Domestic abuse** – The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 introduced the first ever statutory definition of domestic abuse (section 1 of the Act). The statutory definition is clear that domestic abuse may be a single incident or a course of conduct which can encompass a wide range of abusive behaviours, including a) physical or sexual abuse; b) violent or threatening behaviour; c) controlling or coercive behaviour; d) economic abuse; and e) psychological, emotional or other abuse. Under the statutory definition, both the person who is carrying out the behaviour and the person to whom the behaviour is directed towards must be aged 16 or over and they must be ‘personally connected’ (as defined in section 2 of the 2021 Act). The definition ensures that different types of relationships are captured, including ex-partners and family members.

**Disability** – The Equality Act 2010 defines a person as having a disability if they have a physical impairment and the impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. It also outlines that a reference to a disabled person is a reference to a person who has a disability. For guidance on how to apply this definition to specific circumstances, please see [Disability: Equality Act 2010 - Guidance on matters to be taken into account in determining questions relating to the definition of disability](#).

**Education providers and childcare settings** – Education providers and childcare settings work with children up to the age of 18. They include schools, alternative provision, pupil referral units and further education. Early education provision within schools and maintained nurseries are also classed as education providers and childcare settings as are private nurseries and childminders.

**Enabler** – The enablers described in the National Framework refer to aspects of the children’s social care system that facilitate effective support for children, young people and families. The enablers are foundational to good practice.

**Early help** – In the current system, early help is non-statutory multi-agency support provided by local authorities and partners to children and families. Early help is often delivered within universal services at lower levels of need.

**Extra-familial harm** – Children may be at risk of or experiencing physical, sexual or emotional abuse and exploitation in contexts outside their families (see glossary definition of extra-familial contexts). While there is no legal definition for the term extra-familial harm, it is widely used to describe different forms of harm that occur outside the home. Children can be vulnerable to multiple forms of extra-familial harm from both adults and/or other children, and harm may be perpetrated or facilitated by individuals or groups.

Examples of extra-familial harm may include (but are not limited to): criminal exploitation (such as county lines and financial exploitation); serious violence; modern slavery and trafficking; online harm; sexual exploitation (including group-based child sexual exploitation); child-on-child (non-familial) sexual abuse and other forms of harmful sexual behaviour displayed by children towards their peers; abuse, and/or coercive control children may experience in their own intimate relationships (sometimes called teenage relationship abuse), and the influences of extremism which could lead to radicalisation.

**Extra-familial contexts** – Extra-familial contexts include a range of environments outside the family home in which harm can occur. These can include peer groups, school, and community/public spaces, including known places in the community where there are concerns about risks to children (for example, parks, housing estates, shopping centres, takeaway restaurants, or transport hubs), as well as online, including social media or gaming platforms.

**Family Help** – Family Help is for all children, young people and families whose needs are multiple and/or complex. This includes those who are currently eligible for targeted early help or receiving support and services as a child in need, and those subject to child protection enquiries and plans. When we refer to Family Help, we mean both targeted early help and support and services delivered under section 17 of the Children Act 1989.

**Family Help Lead Practitioner** – Family Help is led by Family Help Lead Practitioners (FHLPs) who will be a range of practitioners from different disciplines with the right knowledge, skills and experience to support families who need help and support. Some

will be social work qualified, and others will have alternative appropriate skills or qualifications. They may or may not be employed directly by the local authority but will be integrated into multi-disciplinary Family Help teams with appropriate oversight set out in the safeguarding partners' local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements. In line with the National Framework, FHLPs will work with families to build strong relationships based on respect and work in a strengths-based way, recognising that families, and family networks, will often have solutions to their own challenges. FHLPs will have a focus on the whole family, recognising this is often the best way of improving outcomes for children and young people.

**Family Help multi-disciplinary teams** – Family Help is delivered through community-based, multi-disciplinary teams which wrap help and support around children, young people and their families. This should take a whole family approach – considering not only the presenting needs of the child or young person, but also the needs of the family and how those impact children and young people. Where needed, a range of practitioners and services should be provided for the family, so a range of needs can be addressed, and challenges overcome. The exact make-up of the teams will vary by local areas, who should refer to their population needs assessment to enable services respond to local need. The Family Help Lead Practitioner will co-ordinate this support through the team around the family (TAF), helping a family to navigate the help and support they need, which might include accessing multiple services.

**Family group decision making** –Family group decision-making is an umbrella term for voluntary, family-led decision-making forums in which a child's family network has all the resources, adequate preparation, relevant information and a safe and appropriate environment to make a plan in response to concerns about a child's safety and wellbeing, working alongside skilled professionals. The Department for Education does not prescribe a particular model for delivering family group decision-making. However, local partnerships should consider the strong evidence for the family group conference model. In both domestic and international studies, family group conferences have been shown to be highly effective in supporting families, improving decision-making processes and diverting children from care.

**Family network** – A group of people close to a child, made up of relatives and also non-related connected people (where connected people has the same definition used in The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010 in addition to close family friends who have a connection with the child). A family network could include step-parents, siblings, aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents, or close family friends.

**Harmful sexual behaviour** – Sexual behaviours expressed by children and young people under the age of 18 years old that are developmentally inappropriate, may be harmful towards self or others, or be abusive towards another child, young person or adult.

**Kinship care** – a child lives in kinship care if –

- A. the child lives with a relative, friend or other person connected with the child for all or part of the time, and
- B. the child lives with that person for all of the time, or for more time than the child lives with a parent, and they provide all of the care and support provided for the child, or more of that care and support than is provided for the child by a parent, or
- C. the child lives with two or more people mentioned in part (a) all or most of the time (whether or not the child lives with those people at the same time), and those people, taken together, provide all or most of the care and support provided for the child.
- D. Kinship carers do not include:
  - a) a parent of the child,
  - b) a local authority foster parent who had no connection with the child prior to the child being placed with them, or
  - c) a person caring for the child in a professional capacity.

**Looked-after child** – A child is looked after by a local authority if they are provided with accommodation for a continuous period of more than 24 hours (section 20 Children Act 1989) or are subject to a care order (defined in section 22(1) Children Act 1989).

**Multi-agency working** – Working across organisations to meet children’s needs including effective information sharing, joint decision making and co-ordinated interventions.

**Multi-disciplinary working** – A range of practitioners and professionals from different backgrounds working together to enable the best outcomes for children.

**Outcome** – The outcomes described in the National Framework are what children’s social care should achieve for the children, young people and families they support. They reflect the core purpose of children’s social care.

**Parent** – Our definition of parent includes:

- any birth parent, with or without parental responsibility for the child
- any stepparent, with or without parental responsibility for the child, who is in a subsisting relationship with the birth parent
- any adoptive parent
- any parent by virtue of section 42 or section 43 of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 2008, whether or not they have parental responsibility for the child

**Practice supervisors** – In the National Framework, the term ‘practice supervisors’ refers to those in middle-management positions who are qualified, registered, social workers and whose primary function is to supervise the practice and decision-making of child and family practitioners, and to develop the skills of individuals and teams within children’s social care. As with senior leaders, the exact roles, or titles will vary by local authority, but in general, ‘practice supervisors’ refers to team managers, service managers, and Principal Social Workers.

**Practitioners** – In the National Framework, the term ‘practitioners’ refers to those working directly with children, young people and families, building relationships and providing support. To a certain extent, everyone in children’s social care might be considered a practitioner, given their practice affects the lives of families, and many practice supervisors and senior leaders will also be working directly with children and young people. While this is not an exhaustive list, ‘practitioners’ refers to social workers (including alternatively qualified), senior practitioners, family support workers, multi-disciplinary and multi-agency practitioners with expertise in specific fields such as domestic abuse, mental health, and substance misuse.

**Relative** – The Children Act 1989 (section 105) defines a relative as in relation to a child, meaning a grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt (whether of the full blood or half blood or by marriage or civil partnership) or step-parent. This guidance uses this definition and includes cousins when referring to relatives.

**Safeguarding** – Defined for the purposes of this guidance as:

- protecting children from maltreatment, whether the risk of harm comes from within the child’s family and/or outside (from the wider community), including online
- preventing impairment of children’s mental and physical health or development
- ensuring that children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care
- taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes

**Safeguarding partners** – A safeguarding partner in relation to a local authority area in England is defined under the Children Act 2004 as: (a) the local authority, (b) an integrated care board for an area any part of which falls within the local authority area, and (c) the chief officer of police for an area any part of which falls within the local authority area. The 3 safeguarding partners should agree on ways to co-ordinate their safeguarding services; act as a strategic leadership group in supporting and engaging others; and implement local and national learning, including from serious child safeguarding incidents. To fulfil this role, the 3 safeguarding partners must set out how they will work together and with any relevant agencies as well as arrangements for conducting local reviews.

**Section 17** – Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 is a general duty on local authorities to safeguard and promote the welfare of ‘children in need’ in their area.

**Section 20** – Section 20 of the Children Act 1989 sets out when a local authority must provide accommodation for a child in need within their area if that child needs it, due to the child being lost/abandoned or there being no person with parental responsibility for that child.

**Section 31** – Section 31 of the Children Act 1989 sets out the circumstances in which a court may order that a child who is suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm be placed in the care, or under the supervision of a local authority.

**Section 47** –Where a child in a local authority’s area is subject to an emergency protection order, is in police custody or maybe suffering or likely to suffer significant harm, local authority social care services must make enquiries and decide if any action must be taken under section 47 of the Children Act 1989. This will include multi-agency assessment, and where appropriate multi-agency strategy discussions, planning and review.

**Secure children’s homes** – Secure children's homes are residential homes for vulnerable children aged between 10 and 20. These homes restrict children's liberty in order to ensure their safety. Secure children's homes are run by local authorities, voluntary organisations, or they are privately run.

**Senior leaders** – In the National Framework the term ‘senior leaders’ refers to the range of roles and individuals that set the vision and strategy for children’s social care and are responsible for designing and delivering services that address the needs of children and young people. The exact roles or titles will vary by local authority, but in general, ‘senior leaders’ refers to local political leaders, typically the Lead Member for Children’s Services, who are responsible for setting vision and are democratically accountable, as well as leaders including Chief Executives, Directors of Children’s Services, Assistant Directors of Children’s Services, Heads of Services and Virtual School Heads.

**Supported accommodation** – Supported accommodation is a type of accommodation that is provided or arranged by local authorities under their duties under the Children Act 1989 for 16- and 17-year-old looked-after children and care leavers who are ready to begin living more independently. It is defined in regulation 2 of the Care Standards Act 2000 (Extension of the Application of Part 2 to Supported Accommodation) (England) Regulations 2022. There are many forms of supported accommodation which deliver different types of living arrangements for young people. All forms of supported accommodation accommodating looked-after children and/or care leavers aged 16 and 17 must comply with the regulatory framework including the Quality Standards set out under the Care Standards Act 2000 and the Support Accommodation (England) Regulations 2023 made under that Act.

**Targeted early help** – refers to targeted support delivered to children and families through Family Help who have multiple and or complex needs. Families receiving this support will have a plan in place and will be appointed a lead practitioner. This support takes place before statutory intervention.

**Team around the family (TAF)** – refers to the multi-disciplinary and multi-agency group of practitioners who will make sure children and families get the right help and support to meet their bespoke needs and circumstances at the right time. TAFs will look different for every family, with different networks of professionals depending on the needs of the family. Some of the professionals within the TAF will be more intensively involved, and others will provide advice and consultation.

**Trauma** – The government defines trauma as follows: “Trauma results from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as harmful or life threatening. While unique to the individual, generally the experience of trauma can cause lasting adverse effects, limiting the ability to function and achieve mental, physical, social, emotional or spiritual well-being.”<sup>5</sup>

**Working Together** – Working Together to Safeguard Children is the statutory guidance that sets out expectations for the system that provides help, support and protection for children and their families, giving practitioners clarity about what is required of them individually and how they need to work in partnership with each other to deliver effective services. Working Together applies at every level from senior leaders to those in direct practice with families and across all agencies and organisations that come into contact with children.

**Young carer** – A young carer is a person under 18 who provides or intends to provide care for another person (of any age, except generally where that care is provided for payment, pursuant to a contract or as voluntary work). Young adult carers are aged 16 to 25 and may have different support needs as they transition to adulthood.

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<sup>5</sup> [Working definition of trauma-informed practice](#)

## Following the National Framework alongside other pieces of guidance

Safeguarding partners and other relevant agencies, including education providers and childcare settings, have guidance that relates to how they work to protect the safety and support the wellbeing of children and young people. The National Framework does not replace these pieces of guidance, and should be read alongside guidance (the list below is alphabetical and not exhaustive):

[Authorised professional practice for policing](#)

[Care of unaccompanied migrant children and child victims of modern slavery](#)

[Children who run away or go missing from home or care statutory guidance](#)

[Criminal exploitation of children and vulnerable adults: county lines](#)

[Early years foundation stage \(EYFS\) statutory framework](#)

[Every child matters: statutory guidance](#)

[Families First Partnership programme](#)

[Homelessness code of guidance for local authorities](#)

[Information sharing advice for safeguarding practitioners](#)

[Joint housing protocols for care leavers: good practice advice](#)

[Modern Slavery: statutory guidance for England and Wales \(under s49 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015\) and non-statutory guidance for Scotland and Northern Ireland](#)

[Multi-agency Practice Principles for responding to child exploitation and extra-familial harm](#)

[National Framework for Children and Young People's Continuing Care 2016](#)

[National protocol on reducing criminalisation of looked-after children](#)

[Promoting the Health and Wellbeing of Looked-After Children](#)

[Safeguarding children, young people and adults at risk in the NHS – Safeguarding accountability and assurance framework](#)

[Working together to safeguard children](#)



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