

APPENDIX 5 – WORKING TOGETHER TO SAFEGUARD CHILDREN (HM GOVERNMENT, 2023) – ISSUED FEBRUARY 2024

As the version of this statutory guidance was published in December 2023 (mid academic year) schools have been advised to add this appendix to the existing ‘Safeguarding Children and Child Protection Policies and Procedures’ template document. This should be shared with all staff and they should then confirm that they have read and understood this appendix and there should be a pathway (usually contacting the DSL/DDSL) should they have further questions and/or wish to seek further clarification.

The content of this appendix focuses on the changes that most impact/have greatest relevance for schools staff and day to day safeguarding in their school, there are likely to be changes in the foreseeable future to local policies, procedures and guidance via the local safeguarding children partnership.

This Department for Education (DfE) statutory guidance sets out what organisations and agencies who have functions relating to children must and should do to help, protect and promote the welfare of all children and young people under the age of 18 in England.

This new edition of Working together is central to delivering on the strategy set out in *Stable homes, built on love* (2023), which outlines the Government’s commitment to support every child to grow up in a safe, stable and loving home.

Changes/additions to definition of Safeguarding

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is defined for the purposes of this guidance as:

- providing help and support to meet the needs of children as soon as problems emerge*
- protecting children from maltreatment, whether that is within or outside the home, including online*
- preventing impairment of children’s mental and physical health or development*
- ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care*
- promoting the upbringing of children with their birth parents, or otherwise their family through a kinship care arrangement, whenever possible and where this is in the best interests of the children*
- taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes in line with the outcomes set out in the Children’s Social Care National Framework.*

Child protection is part of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and is defined for the purpose of this guidance as activity that is undertaken to protect specific children who are suspected to be suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm. This includes harm that occurs inside or outside the home, including online. Effective safeguarding means practitioners should understand and be sensitive to factors, including economic and social circumstances and ethnicity, which can impact children and families' lives.

Suitable Education

All children aged 5 to 16 are legally entitled to a full-time education, suitable to any special educational need. Education is essential for children's progress, wellbeing and wider development and being in school is a protective factor against wider harms, including exploitation. Where children are not receiving education, either because they persistently missing school, or are not registered at a school and not receiving a suitable education otherwise, this could be a possible indicator of neglect, abuse or exploitation or could in itself constitute neglect in severe and sustained cases. It is important that relevant information where children are home educated is shared between local authorities, schools, colleges, and other relevant partners. Parents have a right to educate their children at home providing the education is suitable. When a child of school age is not a registered pupil at a school and is not receiving suitable education at home, this could be an indicator of neglect, abuse, or exploitation. Schools must notify the local authority of a child's removal from the school roll at a non-standard transition, and they should also share information on a child's circumstances, especially if already known to children's social care or if they have an EHC plan.

Multi-agency safeguarding arrangements

Local Safeguarding Children Partnerships should create an environment which enables all schools (including independent schools and academy trusts), colleges, early years, and other education and childcare providers in the local area to be fully engaged, involved and included in local safeguarding arrangements. This means making sure that the views and contributions of education and childcare providers are articulated at the highest level of decision-making. Although it may be challenging for a single education or childcare leader to speak on behalf of all local providers, LSPs should have an education representative at strategic discussions representing the education sector. These local leaders will bring insights on the experiences of children locally, and on how arrangements impact on the education and childcare system.

Education providers, including multi-academy trusts, have a responsibility to play their full part in local safeguarding arrangements, including where their footprint extends across several local authority areas. This includes, but should not be limited to, responding to safeguarding audits of quality and compliance, as requested by the local authority and/or local safeguarding partners. This is to ensure that policies are consistent with the local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements and relevant legislation and/or regulations. They should also provide staff and governor training that meets local and national safeguarding requirements. Education providers where required should report their audits to their governing bodies and proprietors to be shared as requested by the LSPs. Training for designated safeguarding leads and designated teachers should include shared understanding about different levels of need and how these need to be responded to.

Providing help, support and protection

This area is broken down into 3 sections:

- Early help
- Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children
- Child protection

Working with parents and carers

The updated guidance sets out four principles that professionals should follow when working with parents and carers:

- *effective partnership and the importance of building strong, positive, trusting and co-operative relationships*
- *respectful, non-blaming, clear and inclusive verbal and non-verbal communication that is adapted to the needs of parents and carers*
- *empowering parents and carers to participate in decision making by equipping them with information, keeping them updated and directing them to further resources*
- *involving parents and carers in the design of processes and services that affect them*

Harm outside the home

- Practitioners should consider the needs, experiences and vulnerabilities of the individuals or groups who are experiencing, or are at risk of experiencing, harm outside the home – including from criminal exploitation, sexual exploitation or serious violence.
- Practitioners should work with relevant partner agencies to consider the influence of groups or individuals perpetrating the harm.
- Professionals should assess whether a child who is experiencing, or is at risk of experiencing, harm outside the home is in need under section 17 or 47 of the Children Act 1989