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Open consultation

Guide for children and young people: Working Together to Safeguard Children

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Applies to England

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Introduction

We're asking for the public's views on planned changes to Working Together to Safeguard Children, which is the guidance used by people whose job it is to help children and keep them safe.

This is a guide for children and young people about the changes we're planning. If you'd like more information, you can also read the introduction to the full document about the [planned changes to Working Together](#).

Your views are important, and we want to hear them. They will make sure our changes do what children and young people need them to do.

What is Working Together?

Working Together to Safeguard Children (usually just called Working Together) tells teachers, police officers, doctors, nurses, social workers and lots of other people working with children and their families what they should be doing to help children and keep them safe.

In Working Together, when we say 'children', we mean anyone who has not yet had their 18th birthday.

A local authority is a local government. Local authorities make decisions about things that happen in a community, including how to keep children safe.

When we talk about a 'safeguarding partner' or 'practitioners and professionals who work for safeguarding partners', we mean people who work in local authorities or in health, and the police.

When we talk about a 'child and family social worker', we mean a person who usually works for a local authority and whose job it is to help and listen to children and their families, and make decisions to keep children safe.

When we talk about 'practitioners', we mean anyone who works with children and their families.

Things to do as you read this guide

We'd like you to give us your views on our planned changes to Working Together.

As you're reading this guide, you may want to:

- think about your own opinions of the changes
- talk to other children and young people or adults about your opinions
- think about what could be done to make the changes happen

If you're reading the guide in a group, you may want to:

- talk about which changes you think are the most important
- imagine some situations in which those changes could make a difference to children's lives
- share ideas about the things you could do to make the changes happen

We want to hear from children and young people so we can understand and take note of what they think about our plans. There is also a [consultation for all the people who work with children and their families](#).

Support if you need it

If there's anything here that you do not understand, you can ask an adult to explain it to you. This could be a parent, a social worker, a teacher or another adult you trust.

If you're worried about anything you read, talk to an adult about it. You can speak to someone you know or use one of the 3 services listed below. These are there to help you.

If you're being harmed, or you know another child who's being harmed, tell a teacher, a nurse, a social worker (if you have one) or another adult you trust straightaway. It's their job to help keep you and other children safe.

ChildLine can offer safe, confidential help with any worry 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. You can use the one-to-one chat on their website or call them free on 0800 1111.

Help at Hand can offer advice and information, as well as support with any difficulties you may be facing, if you're in care, living away from home or a care leaver. You can call them free on 0800 528 0731.

Always Heard can offer help and advice to looked-after children and care leavers. You can call them free on 0808 800 5792.

Planned changes in Working Together

Section 1: A shared endeavour

'A shared endeavour' is another way of saying 'working together towards the same goal'. Sometimes, when children and their families need help, more than one person or service will be able to offer to help them.

Being a parent or carer can be hard, and it's important that families can get the right help at the right time. Help could be offered in many different ways, such as by your school or your family's doctor.

Parents and carers should be able to easily find out what help is available if they need it to make changes to better support their family. If a family needs help from different people and services, all those people should work together with the family to agree what help they need and who they get it from.

In Working Together, we've set out 4 ways people helping families should work with parents and carers when they need help. We've said that people working with parents and carers should:

- build positive and trusting relationships, and work with families to understand what they're good at and what they need help with
- use language that everyone understands and that's respectful
- make sure that parents and carers know what's happening, have all the information they need to make good choices, and know where to get more information if they need it
- involve parents and carers in setting up the services that are there to help them

We also want everyone to be really clear about how to work together with families. Sometimes, if there are lots of people trying to help a child or their family, it can feel confusing.

In Working Together, we've said that everyone, wherever they work and whatever job they do, should make sure they do 5 things to work together. These are:

- have the same goals
- learn together and from each other
- make sure they have what they need to help families
- understand that families are all different and need different things
- ask each other questions when they do not agree

Section 2: Multi-agency safeguarding arrangements

‘Multi-agency’ means how all the people who work in different places (like those in schools, and doctors, nurses and social workers) need to work together to support children and protect them from harm.

Those whose job it is to make sure that all children in a community are safe and well are called safeguarding partners.

There are 3 types of safeguarding partners. They are:

- people who work in local authorities
- people who work in health
- the police

Safeguarding partners should work closely together to make the best decisions about how to keep children safe and to see that children get what they need.

In Working Together, we’ve said more about how safeguarding partners have to work with each other. We’ve:

- set out what people who work in local authorities, people who work in health and the police each have to do
- made clear what leaders need to do so they work in an open way, sort out any disagreements and learn from mistakes
- made the role of education stronger, because schools, colleges, early years providers and other education professionals play such an important role in children’s lives

Section 3: Help and support for children and their families

All children should live in a safe and loving home where the people looking after them understand what they need.

Most often, parents do a good job of keeping children safe. But sometimes, they have problems of their own that mean they find it hard to keep their children safe and healthy.

Help should be given to children who need it as soon as possible. This is called ‘Early Help’.

Sometimes, family members like grandparents, aunts, uncles or family friends can also help children and parents to make the situation better.

In Working Together, we want to be much clearer about the help and support that children should get. We have made clearer:

- how important all family members and close friends are in improving children’s lives
- how and when family members should be involved and supported

- how important those who work in childcare, schools and colleges are in keeping children safe
- that those who work directly with children in need of help do not always have to be a child and family social worker
- how those in children's social care should support disabled children and their families
- that the most important thing is to get the best possible results for all children, including those who are disabled

Section 4: Decisive multi-agency child protection

'Decisive' means 'very clear'.

We want all services to work together in the best possible way to protect children. Sometimes, children are hurt by people from inside their home. Sometimes, there are people outside their family who hurt them. We want everyone working with children to spot when a child is or might be being hurt by someone and to do something about it as quickly as possible.

In Working Together, we've written down what everyone working with children should look out for and what they should do if they're worried that a child might be getting hurt. We've called these 'child protection standards' – and they're for everyone who works with children (which is what is meant here by 'multi-agency').

We've also made it much clearer what everyone who works with children should do if they're worried that the harm is from outside of their home. Sometimes, children can feel unsafe in the places they go to, or they're asked to do dangerous or harmful things. This might include when things are happening at school or in their local community, like at the local shops. We want to make sure that everyone – including teachers, the police, social workers and other adults who children might ask for help – know what to do and how to work together when this happens.

Questions about Working Together 2023

We'd like you to answer the following questions on our planned changes to Working Together. You'll need to visit [another website](#) to send us your answers.

Question 1

What is the most important thing everyone working with families can do together to support parents, carers and children?

Question 2

There are lots of people who work with children to help them stay safe. Who is the most important person who works with children and why?

Question 3

If your friend told you they don't feel safe, what is the most important thing that the adults who help them can do?

Question 4

Is there anything else you would like to tell us about the changes we want to make in Working Together?

Question 5

How old are you? Choose one of the following:

- 11 or younger
- 12 to 15
- 16 to 18
- 19 to 25
- prefer not to say

Question 6

Who are you? Choose one of the following:

- a child or young person with a social worker or family support worker
- a child or young person in care
- a care leaver
- none of the above
- prefer not to say

What will happen next

We'll read all the answers you give us and think about them carefully. We'll also talk to groups of children and young people about what they think of our plans.

In the winter of 2023, we'll publish a document showing what everyone told us.

We'll then review the Working Together guidance every year to make sure it's accurate and to see what extra changes we may need to make.

We'll keep talking to children and young people as we make changes, to find out what they think. We want to make sure that every change makes a positive difference to children's lives.

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