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Guidance

# Supporting local areas to embed working together to safeguard children and the national framework

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**Applies to England**

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[Working together to safeguard children](#) and the children's social care [national framework](#):

- clarifies existing statutory duties
- sets national direction for practice
- sets the expectations for multi-agency working across the whole system of help, support and protection for children and their families

Support is available for local areas and their partner agencies to:

- implement changes in working together to safeguard children
- embed the national framework in practice

## Investment to support local areas

The Department for Education (DfE) is investing more than £7 million, over the next 2 years to support local areas.

This consists of £6.48 million grant funding in January 2024, for safeguarding partners to:

- make changes to multi-agency safeguarding arrangements in light of the revised working together to safeguard children statutory guidance
- build a shared understanding between agencies of what the national framework means for multi-agency working

We will issue over £700,000 in additional grant funding for local authority regional improvement and innovation alliances to:

- understand where practice in local authorities, and across multi-agency partnerships, is working well and achieving positive outcomes, and where practice might need to change in light of the national framework
- review and update existing self-assessment, peer challenge and sector-led improvement plans
- increase the days available to deliver packages of sector-led support, for local authorities who would most benefit from it
- work with [Research in Practice](#) to understand how prepared they are to implement the [social worker agency rules](#), and identify best practice and support needs around the social worker workforce

Local authorities should consider if they have strong models of working that could be shared to benefit others in their region.

We have issued grant determination letters for:

- [regional improvement and innovation alliances](#)
- [strengthening multi-agency leadership](#)

## Further support for local areas

In addition to funding, local areas can also access a range of tools to support them to improve practice.

This includes national facilitators who will:

- help safeguarding partners to implement changes related to multi-agency working
- identify local areas already working in this way and those who need most support through the use of a maturity tool allowing partners to review how aligned they are to new guidance
- facilitate networking to share good and emerging practice

There will be a series of [learning events](#) throughout 2024, to:

- share information and advice on statutory guidance
- discuss good practice

DfE's regional teams, improvement advisors and commissioners and sector led improvement partners will continue to support local authorities to deliver improvement activity.

## Responding to working together to safeguard children

Local areas should reflect on how to strengthen multi-agency working across the whole system of help, support and protection for children and their families, and children's social care, as part of a single system.

Local multi-agency leaders should read [working together to safeguard children](#) alongside this advice.

Leaders should review their current arrangements and identify what reforms need to be made to comply with statutory guidance.

We expect local areas to publish updated arrangements in December 2024.

Everyone who provides support to children, young people and families should read working together to safeguard children and understand what the changes mean for their practice.

They should commit to reviewing current practice and identifying where improvements may be

needed so that the best possible outcomes for children, young people and families are being achieved.

## Next steps for safeguarding partners

After reading [working together to safeguard children](#), safeguarding partners for every local area should:

- commit to reviewing multi-agency safeguarding arrangements
- identify where improvements may be needed to strengthen services to deliver the best possible outcomes for children, young people and families
- identify and agree named lead and delegate safeguarding partners for each statutory agency, after reviewing the functions listed in chapter 2 of working together to safeguard children
- appoint one of the delegated safeguarding partners as the partnership chair for the multi-agency arrangements
- remove the role of independent chair (if this is still in place)
- consider the role of education partners within the partnership structure and strengthen this where necessary
- publish and submit a yearly report by September 2024 and publish revised multi-agency arrangements by December 2024
- implement effective information-sharing arrangements between agencies

Partners must also agree how the core functions of the partnership chair and independent scrutiny will be delivered, and amend structures and arrangements as necessary.

The lead and delegate safeguarding partners must ensure there is independent scrutiny to evaluate how effective multi-agency safeguarding arrangements are.

Safeguarding partners should review funding arrangements to ensure that agencies are contributing enough to support the decision-making infrastructure and statutory requirements of local arrangements.

They should review current ways of working to support effective practice as set out in the multi-agency expectations, principles for working with parents and carers and the multi-agency child protection standards.

## Responding to the national framework

Local authorities have a 12-month period, from 15 December 2023 to 20 December 2024, to:

- begin the work to embed the [national framework](#)
- make plans for how they align practice systems to the expectations for children's social care

Many local authorities and regions already have improvement plans to strengthen practice. They should begin to align this to the outcomes set out in the national framework.

## The national framework and the Supporting Families Programme

As you respond to the national framework, you should consider how the guidance operates alongside the [Supporting Families: Early Help System guide](#) and the [Supporting Families Outcome Framework](#). These already provide a framework to local areas on what a mature system, which supports children, young people and families at an early stage, can look like.

## Next steps for local authority senior leaders

Senior leaders set the vision and strategy and are responsible, and accountable, for designing and delivering children's services. The term senior leader generally refers to:

- local political leaders, typically lead members for children's services
- local authority chief executives
- directors and assistant directors of children's services
- heads of services
- virtual school heads

After reading the [national framework](#), senior leaders should:

- champion the national framework within the local authority and encourage their workforce to read and understand what it means for practice
- commit to the highest aspirations for the outcomes of children, young people and families being supported by children's social care, including children in or leaving care
- assess how ambitious local practice is, how far local practice culture reflects the principles for practice, what barriers need to be overcome, and what support might be needed to achieve this
- seek opportunities to engage with children, young people and families to explore innovative ways to capture feedback and how this should be used to inform practice change and improvements
- use the national framework to support self-assessments, peer challenge exercises and sector-led improvement delivered through the regional improvement and innovation alliances, highlight any gaps that may need to be addressed and reflect these in local and regional improvement plans
- review what it means for existing multi-agency safeguarding arrangements
- work in collaboration with all partner agencies to ensure there is a shared understanding and plan how to change and strengthen practice
- recognise the importance of the system enablers in ensuring the workforce and partner agencies work in conditions that allow the outcomes to be effectively met

From 2024, senior leaders should consider how to implement recommendations of published practice guides for practice interventions and approaches that are shown to achieve the outcomes set out in the national framework.

## Next steps for practice supervisors

Practice supervisors are qualified social workers with the responsibility to supervise the practice and decision making of child and family practitioners. Practice supervisors generally include:

- service managers
- team managers
- principal social workers

After reading the [national framework](#), practice supervisors should:

- refresh aspirations for children, young people and families, and reflect on what the expectations for practice mean for themselves and their teams
- work with senior leaders to understand how practice systems could be reviewed and strengthened to align to outcomes of the national framework
- support teams and practitioners to discuss the national framework and what it means for practice
- agree how the outcomes and expectations for practice can be used to support reflection on how far practice is impactful as part of reflective supervision
- work with practitioners to explore how the national framework might be used to support and focus continuous professional development
- identify learning opportunities for teams and individuals where there are gaps in knowledge, skills and experience
- work with senior leaders and practitioners to embed the principles set out in the enablers, so the right conditions are in place for the workforce to effectively meet the outcomes

Practice supervisors should seek opportunities to engage with children, young people and families and develop innovative ways to capture feedback to inform practice. They should promote this to practitioners, and share their findings with senior leaders to consider how it might shape both practice and culture change.

## Next steps for practitioners

Practitioners work directly with children, young people and families providing support. This generally refers to:

- child and family social workers
- senior child social work practitioners
- family support workers

- personal advisors for care leavers
- practitioners from other disciplines including those with expertise in specific fields such as domestic abuse and substance misuse

After reading the [national framework](#), practitioners should:

- refresh aspirations for children, young people and families and consider how the expectations for practice should change the support being offered to families
- share views with senior leaders and practice supervisors on how practice could be strengthened to align to outcomes of the national framework
- reflect on how the national framework might aid continuous professional development
- identify learning opportunities to improve knowledge, skills and experience
- draw on engagement with children, young people and families to explore innovative ways to capture feedback and how this can be used to inform practice
- take an active role in capturing and sharing this feedback with leaders
- raise awareness and support children, young people and families to understand the national framework, drawing on the children and young people's version

Practitioners will also need to reflect on current support plans for children, young people and families and how they align to the national framework. Here they can identify what might need to change to achieve outcomes.

They should use it to collaborate with peers and practice supervisors to discuss how the national framework can be used as part of practice reflection, reflective supervision, and peer discussions to aid decision making.

## Supporting learning and understanding progress

Local areas should use their existing quality assurance processes, operational data, and governance structures to improve practice with children, young people and families.

## Yearly reports and published arrangements for multi-agency safeguarding

Safeguarding partners should produce yearly reports and publish their arrangements. This is to ensure:

- arrangements are transparent
- there is accountability for how they coordinate, deliver and fund services

These reports allow leaders to review the effectiveness of current arrangements and identify what changes are required to be compliant with statutory guidance. They are also a means to understand how learning is being embedded.

For consistency across local areas, the yearly reports should be submitted and published by the end of September every year, starting from 2024. They should reflect work undertaken the previous financial year (April to March).

They should be submitted to:

- Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel: [nationalreviewpanel@education.gov.uk](mailto:nationalreviewpanel@education.gov.uk)
- Foundations (What Works Centre for Children and Families): [policy@foundations.org.uk](mailto:policy@foundations.org.uk)

Arrangements should be published in December 2024 so that both documents reflect the reforms set out in the guidance.

Published arrangements should outline:

- the named lead and delegated safeguarding partner
- revised structures of governance, including the interface between the independent scrutineer and partnership chair
- how arrangements will be funded
- how education settings are incorporated into the partnership at a strategic level
- how information will be shared between partners

## The role of inspection

Ofsted is an important part of the system that works for children and families. It uses the inspection of local authorities children's services framework (ILACS) to evaluate the quality and impact of local authority services for the help, protection and care of children and their families.

In reports, Ofsted set out what local authorities are doing well and where they need to improve.

Safeguarding partners are inspected jointly through:

- their respective inspectorate bodies (Ofsted, the Care Quality Commission and HM Inspectorate of Constabulary, Fire and Rescue Services)
- joint targeted area inspections

Joint targeted area inspections can be one of 2 types:

- evaluating the multi-agency response to identification of initial need and risk
- looking at a particular theme or cohort of children

These help local systems to continually improve their multi-agency practice and structures in safeguarding and protecting the welfare of all children.

Ofsted will continue to inspect against its ILACS framework. We will continue to work with Ofsted to rebalance inspection, so it is aligned with reform.

Local authorities will have a year in which to embed the national framework in practice. Following



this period, government will work with Ofsted to gain a better understanding of which local authorities are leading the way in improving the experiences and progress of children, and which may need additional support.

## Children's social care dashboard

The national framework will be supported by the [children's social care: dashboard and indicator update](#). This will bring children's social care data together in one place to understand progress towards the outcomes of the national framework.

The dashboard will be a learning tool to help support local authorities to:

- reflect on their own practice over time
- learn best practice from others

We will use it to understand:

- issues or successes
- how much consistency there is in achieving outcomes for children
- what barriers are being faced

## Learning events

There are a number of learning events taking place to support the introduction of the new statutory guidance.

## Implementing changes to Working Together to Safeguard Children

**Tuesday 30 January 2024**

Hosted by DfE, a general engagement opportunity to discuss working together to safeguard children and understand what the revisions mean for practice.

Register for the [Implementing changes to Working Together to Safeguard Children](#) event.

## Introduction to the Children's Social Care National Framework and Dashboard

## Thursday 1 February 2024

Hosted by DfE, and members of the [Children's Social Care National Practice Group](#), a general engagement opportunity for all safeguarding partners and relevant agencies, including education settings, to:

- discuss the national framework and dashboard
- understand what the new statutory guidance means for practice

Register for the [Introduction to the Children's Social Care National Framework and Dashboard](#) event.

## Future learning events

DfE will deliver further learning events throughout 2024, including:

- events led by national facilitators and NHS England safeguarding leads
- regional national framework events delivered in collaboration with the sector and members of the Children's Social Care National Practice Group

We will add further information on these events when available.

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