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Policy paper

Multi-agency child protection teams: regulation-making powers

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Introduction

The [Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill](#) (the bill) is a key step towards delivering the government's [opportunity mission](#) to break the link between children's background and their future success.

The child protection measures strengthen multi-agency responses to significant harm. Clause 3 creates a new duty for safeguarding partners – local authorities, police and integrated care boards – to establish multi-agency child protection teams (MACPTs).

It allows the Secretary of State for Education to use regulations to further prescribe the:

- functions of MACPTs
- qualification and skills requirements for MACPT members
- relevant agencies that safeguarding partners can approach to facilitate the operation of MACPTs

Purpose of this policy statement

The purpose of this policy statement is to provide clarity on the intended scope and content of the regulations. It seeks to address concerns raised in the House of Lords about the operation of MACPTs and level of prescription in regulations. The information set out is the first step in developing the regulations.

To develop regulations further, we will:

- engage with sectors
- use existing best evidence of effective multi-agency working
- use emerging evidence from the Families First for Children pathfinder areas (pathfinders)
- use emerging evidence from the implementation of the Families First Partnership (FFP) programme national rollout

Regulations will be subject to consultation and robust Parliamentary scrutiny with the

aim for them to come into force in late 2027, subject to royal assent.

An effective system of multi-agency child protection

There is already strong child protection practice in the system. However, this is not consistently the case. Our ambition is for a child protection system:

- that is decisive
- where multi-agency practitioners have the expertise, experience, time and support to identify, and take effective action in response to, actual or likely significant harm

Practitioners with the expertise to make accurate and timely judgements about whether the significant harm threshold is met will reduce unnecessary intrusion into family life while focusing rapid protective action on children who need it.

To keep children safe from harm and support families, child protection expertise, practice and responsibilities will be needed across the whole system of help, support and protection.

It is our ambition that MACPTs will become a local centre of excellence for multi-agency practitioners, offering information, advice and support on child protection concerns

Families First Partnership programme

For 2026 to 2027 and 2027 to 2028, the government has committed £2.4 billion to the [FFP programme](#), which focuses on multi-agency, system-wide reform by implementing Family Help, MACPTs and Family Group Decision Making.

We continue to work across government and with relevant national health and police agencies to understand the practical implementation, resourcing challenges and opportunities in the context of wider local government, health and police reforms.

Evidence for multi-agency child protection teams

The [Independent Review of Children's Social Care \(the care review\)](#) and the [Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel report \(the Panel report\)](#), [Child Protection in England – National review into the murders of Arthur Labinjo-Hughes and Star Hobson](#), both published in 2022, found that ineffective multi-agency information-sharing, decision-making and coordinated action are key factors where child protection activity fails to keep children safe.

The Panel report recommended multi-agency child protection units in every local authority area to address these issues and commissioned research to explore the most effective operational conditions for high-risk, high-volume decision-making. It concluded there are 5 core conditions required:

- trust
- shared values and identity
- clear information sharing policies
- leadership support
- regular feedback loops and systems that minimise the cost of information-sharing

The Panel concluded that teams with expertise from across agencies underpinned by these principles would be the most effective way of achieving better outcomes for children who need protection. The [Strengthening Families, Protecting Children programme](#)^[footnote 1] also evidences the impact of effective multi-agency and multi-disciplinary working, including that building good relationships between professionals reduced barriers to support to families.

The Panel's report, [Child Protection in England](#), identified a need for specialist child protection skills and expertise, especially in relation to complex risk assessment and decision-making. The care review identified a lack of development of social worker expert knowledge and skills as a significant problem in child protection, resulting in children being less safe.

Early findings from the [independent evaluation of pathfinders](#) show strengthened multi-agency collaboration and improved co-working between social care, education, health and police. Learnings from existing multi-agency working in other parts of the

children's social care system also provide important evidence.

Foundations – the What Works Centre for Children and Families – recently published an [evaluation of multi-agency safeguarding hubs \(MASH\)](#)^[footnote 2], which demonstrated the importance of:

- an effective multi-agency response at the point a child is referred into children's social care
- strong practitioner relationships
- a stable, skilled and experienced workforce
- timely and relevant information sharing between practitioners reducing the likelihood of missing or underestimating risk to a child

Integrating into the wider multi-agency system

Families should receive the right support, at the right time, keeping children at the heart of multi-agency systems. Every local area has a 'front door', a mechanism for determining how to get children and families the help they need. Many are known as MASHs.

Local safeguarding partners will determine the most appropriate way for MACPT to link with the front door arrangement. MACPTs should also link with:

- Prevention Partnerships, operating through Violence Reduction Units (VRUs)
- local Youth Offending Teams
- multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA) strategic management boards, where an offender is a risk to the child
- multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARAC) for domestic abuse

What the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill 2024 says about new multi-

agency child protection teams

[Section 16E of the Children Act 2004](#) requires safeguarding partners to make arrangements for themselves and any appropriate relevant agencies to work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in their area (known as multi-agency safeguarding arrangements).

Clause 3 of the bill introduces a new [section 16EA to the Children Act 2004](#), to include establishing MACPTs as part of these arrangements. The bill requires MACPTs to support the local authority to discharge its child protection duties under section 47 of the Children Act 1989^{[\[footnote 3\]](#)}.

Local authorities continue to be responsible for undertaking child protection enquiries and deciding what action should be taken to protect a child, supported by MACPTs.

Clause 3 requires a social worker, a police representative, a healthcare professional and person with education experience to be members of the MACPT. Safeguarding Partners, therefore, must commit dedicated resource for these roles.

Safeguarding partners have flexibility to nominate additional practitioners to the team in response to local need and harm profiles. For example, some pathfinders have included psychologists and domestic abuse specialists in their teams.

Safeguarding partners will also be able to require a sub-set of relevant agencies^{[\[footnote 4\]](#)} – to be specified in regulations and selected from those relevant agencies prescribed in the [Child Safeguarding Practice Review and Relevant Agency \(England\) Regulations 2018](#) – to facilitate the operation of the MACPTs through a cooperation memorandum.

Power to make regulations in relation to the support provided by multi-agency child protection teams

What the regulation-making power is and how it will

be used

The regulations will clarify the support MACPTs are required to provide to local authorities to discharge their [section 47 duties under the Children Act 1989 \(local authority's duty to investigate\)](#).

What is in scope

The power is expressly limited to prescribing the MACPT functions required to support the local authority to investigate whether a child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm. Our intention is for the regulations to require MACPTs to deliver the following functions:

- convene strategy meetings
- lead section 47 enquiries
- convene child protection conferences and forums
- oversee the development and delivery of child protection plans
- keep child protection plans under review
- provide case consultation for practitioners who need MACPT expertise
- maintain an understanding of patterns of significant harm in the local area and agency responses

The 2023 statutory guidance [Working together to safeguard children](#) sets out expectations for these multi-agency activities and processes. This regulation-making power provides an opportunity to define the role of the MACPT in these activities, clarifying the role of each agency in supporting the local authority to deliver effective and timely protective action for all children.

MACPTs leading strategy discussions and section 47 enquiries

We want MACPTs to convene strategy discussions, embedding a robust and consistent application of the significant harm threshold. [Working together to safeguard children](#) is clear that a strategy discussion should take place where there is reasonable cause to suspect a child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm.

Its purpose is to determine whether the significant harm threshold has been met and a section 47 enquiry is needed. If the threshold has not been met, it provides an

opportunity to determine any other multi-agency action that is needed to safeguard and promote the child's welfare.

We want the regulations to require MACPTs to make these decisions with input from practitioners that know the child and family.

Where the MACPT determines that a section 47 enquiry is needed, the intention is for regulations to require that the MACPT supports the investigation.

On that basis regulations would require MACPT members to ensure their individual agencies seek and share information as part of the enquiry, and that following an enquiry, the MACPT will support the local authority to decide what, if any, action is needed to protect the child.

[Working together to safeguard children](#) provides a good foundation for this, being clear that decisions should already be based on multi-agency discussion.

MACPTs convening and chairing child protection conferences

The intention is for regulations to specify that the MACPT will be required to convene a child protection conference. Regulations could also specify that the MACPT must satisfy itself that:

- a practitioner with sufficient child protection experience and knowledge about the day-to-day life of the family chairs the conference
- the right practitioners are present at the conference across different agencies
- information-sharing and seeking between and within agencies happens in a timely way to support the activities of the conference
- decisions have a multi-agency perspective
- decisions are based on the best evidence available
- parents, carers and families are supported to fully participate in the conference and to take protective action reducing the harm to their child

MACPTs will work closely with Family Help teams to ensure support is brought around the child and family in one integrated system.

Throughout the child protection process, help and support will continue to be coordinated by the Family Help lead practitioner (FHLP). MACPTs will provide an alternative, forensic and expert perspective through engagement with the child and family and by drawing on the expertise of FHLPs and other practitioners who know the child and family.

MACPTs will have a robust understanding of the needs of the child and their family and determine what is needed to reduce significant harm.

MACPTs overseeing child protection planning

The intention is for regulations to require MACPTs to oversee the development, review and closure of child protection plans.

We want this to include informing decisions about moving into pre-proceedings and the Public Law Outline (PLO) process. Accountability of day-to-day support and interventions will remain in Family help, delivered by FHLPs and multi-disciplinary Family Help teams and any other specialist agencies determined by the child protection plan.

[Working together to safeguard children](#) already sets out expectations for the content of child protection plans and the timing of reviews.

MACPTs and the system wide consultation and oversight function

We want regulations to include a MACPT consultation and oversight function for the system. This will involve guiding practice across agencies to support the timely identification of significant harm, maximising opportunities to protect children and reducing unnecessary intrusion into family life where child protection is not needed.

We think it would be helpful for regulations to include requirements on MACPTs to have sufficient expertise to address specific harm types or to support practitioners working with particular groups of children.

We also want regulations to require MACPTs to demonstrate an understanding of local child protection trends and harm types, and evidence how the MACPT can effectively respond to them.

Implementing a shared practice framework

We think it is important that regulations are explicit in requiring MACPTs to have an agreed practice framework that includes senior management oversight and accountability for delivery and delegated decision-making as part of strategic, statutory multi-agency safeguarding arrangements.

This would build trust, shared understanding and language across agencies for child protection practice and support the development of a shared identity, values, purpose and clarity of roles.

Number, size and location of MACPTs in a local area

Clause 3 allows safeguarding partners to determine how many MACPTs they intend to establish based on their:

- local operating model
- partnership footprints
- geography
- needs analysis

MACPTs can be delivered across multiple local authority footprints if safeguarding partners agree. The social work and education practitioners are required to act only in relation to their local authority area. Otherwise, the measure allows for safeguarding partners to satisfy themselves that their MACPT has enough people to operate effectively having regard to the size of the area and any other relevant factors.

Regulations could require that local safeguarding partners have a shared decision-making process for the design and implementation of MACPTs in such circumstances.

What will be included in statutory guidance

The day-to-day operational detail for MACPTs will remain in [Working together to safeguard children](#):

Harm specific responses

MACPTs should be able to respond to the different types of harms. The statutory guidance is already clear about this expectation on agencies at a strategic and operational level. We want to strengthen guidance to require MACPTs to establish clear harm-specific practice frameworks and training requirements.

Accountability through multi-agency safeguarding arrangements (MASA)

The statutory guidance outlines that requirements for multi-agency safeguarding arrangements should include systems of assurance and accountability, alongside independent scrutiny.

We will update the statutory guidance to provide clarity on what MASA governance should look like for MACPTs and their role in establishing a shared practice framework.

The statutory guidance also requires safeguarding partners to jointly report on the activity they have undertaken in a 12-month period as part of their MASA. In future, reporting on the effectiveness of MACPTs will be part of this.

Co-working with Family Help

To reflect end to end system reform, it will be important to set out the role of the MACPT within the broader system of Family Help.

Additional practitioners in MACPTs

Local authorities, in consultation with safeguarding partners, will have the flexibility to determine which other practitioners to include in their MACPTs based on their local need and harm profiles.

We will consider as part of our ongoing sector engagement and upcoming consultation any further guidance that should be provided on this.

Power to make regulations prescribing the requirements for persons nominated as members of the multi-agency child protection team

What the regulation-making power is and how it will be used

This regulation-making power enables the Secretary of State to set out the requirements of the nominated MACPT members.

Regulations will include requirements about their minimum qualifications or experience and will ensure a consistent national standard across agencies in the operation of MACPTs. They will be used to reflect developments in sector standards and emerging evidence about what requirements give rise to the most effective teams, including from the pathfinders and wider reform programme implementation.

What is in scope

This regulation-making power relates to the requirements of the nominated MACPT members prescribed on the face of the bill, which are a:

- social worker
- registered health professional
- police representative
- person with education experience

Clause 3 specifically refers to regulations including qualifications and experience for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. Regulations will set out requirements for delivering effective child protection practice and activities. Through sector engagement and consultation, we intend to consider if requirements, other than qualifications and experience, may be necessary.

When developing regulations, it will be important to get the balance between quality of practice and giving local areas flexibility to recruit practitioners within their available resource and capacity.

What determines skills and expertise for child protection work now

Across the safeguarding partner agencies, there are already national competency and skill frameworks and statutory guidance for child protection expertise. Social workers and health professionals are regulated professionals, and the police representative is required to meet standards set by the College of Policing. These include the:

- government's [post qualifying standards for social workers](#) and [Social Work England's professional standards for safe and effective practice](#), which set out what social workers must know, understand and be able to do^[footnote 5] – the government has also committed to introducing a framework for advanced child protection
- Royal College of Nursing (RCN) [Intercollegiate document 2025 – Safeguarding children and young people and children and young people in care: Competencies for health care staff](#), which provides a clear competency framework for all healthcare staff with regards to safeguarding
- College of Policing's standards for policing including child protection

The 2023 update of [Working together to safeguard children](#) introduced the national multi-agency child protection standard, which apply to all agencies, organisations and individuals involved in child protection.

The statutory guidance [Keeping children safe in education](#) requires that everybody working in a school or college understands their safeguarding responsibilities and provides a comprehensive framework for all staff, leaders and governing bodies to understand and implement effective safeguarding practices. It will be important to consider how these underpin new regulations.

Skills and expertise that MACPT members are expected to have

The qualifications and experience required for MACPT members should reflect the competencies required to provide support to local authorities in delivering their child protection duty. This may vary for members in light of their agency's specific remit, role and responsibility for child protection activity but will include:

- knowledge and understanding of the statutory child protection framework
- an applied understanding of what constitutes actual or likely significant harm
- contributing effectively to assessment of needs, understanding the indicators of abuse, neglect and exploitation
- building an accurate and comprehensive understanding of the child's daily life to establish the likelihood of significant harm
- the ability to assess information for effective and reliable decision-making
- respecting and constructively challenging multi-agency perspectives to reach the best intervention and outcome for the child
- ensuring interventions are prompt, evidence-based and tailored to the child
- listening to what children tell them to help them and their family

Having an appropriate level of seniority or decision-making authority will also be critical, so that MACPT members are able to effectively:

- navigate their agency
- access and collate relevant information
- mobilise input from the practitioners within their agencies

- have the authority to make decisions about child protection intervention

Stakeholder views on relevant qualification and experience for MACPTs

We consulted stakeholders to get initial views on the minimum requirements for regulations and considered the role descriptions for pathfinders and FFPP national rollout. You can sign up to the [Knowledge Hub](#) to find out more.

Social work

The FFP programme guide outlines the new lead child protection practitioner (LCPPs) role. The guide states that this social work role should be embedded in the MACPT and that LCPPs should:

- have substantial frontline child protection experience within children's social care and an in-depth knowledge of the statutory and legislative framework
- be skilled at identifying and responding to all types of significant harm, including extra-familial harm
- know how to work skilfully and confidently with families and parents in child protection, including those who have demonstrated resistant, hostile and/or deceptive behaviour

Some pathfinder areas have prescribed a minimum requirement of post qualification experience, giving practitioners time to develop high quality practice. However, many recognise that length of service was just one component alongside good continuous professional development and strong evidence of competency in child protection. Examples of the requirements included in the LCPP role descriptions include:

- knowledge of legislation, statutory guidance and safeguarding best practice
- leading investigations, chairing multi-agency meetings and navigating high-risk
- supporting other practitioners through complex assessments and casework
- clear communication and ability to collaborate with partners under pressure
- applied analytical approaches
- making decisions independently and managing risk effectively

Health

Pathfinder local areas have appointed health leads from a range of registered health

professions and with suitable qualifications, knowledge and experience of child health and safeguarding. This has usually been a nurse, midwife or health visitor within the Agenda for Change (pay) band of 8a or 8b. Grade 8a/b/c professionals have the required level of accountability and decision-making. This is the equivalent of a Named Safeguarding Professional in an NHS Trust. This role would fall within the level 4 specialist role in the RCN Intercollegiate document.

Cross disciplinary competencies alongside qualifications, grading and post titles will be important. The RCN Intercollegiate document provides a helpful framework of competencies required for the workforce. The competencies prescribed at grade 8a/b/c appear appropriate for the MACPT health professional. Examples of the requirements of the health practitioner in pathfinder role descriptions include:

- the ability to interpret and analyse health information from a range of sources to provide a clinical view
- knowledge of safeguarding children legislation
- knowledge and experience of multi-agency working

Police

Pathfinders have appointed a range of professionals from the police to MACPT roles, including police sergeants and police staff. Pathfinder local areas have expressed that the police representative needs a sufficient level of seniority or decision-making authority. We will continue to explore options for the police role with stakeholders as we develop the regulations. Examples of the requirements of the police practitioner in pathfinder role descriptions include:

- knowledge of the statutory framework including [Working together to safeguard children](#)
- experience of working in child protection
- clear understanding and management of section 47 joint investigations
- experience of decision-making and risk assessment in child protection investigations
- experience in managing the investigation of serious, complex and priority crime

Education

The education practitioner role in pathfinder areas is filled by a range of practitioners including local authority education progress coordinators and designated safeguarding leads (DSLs).

The view is that the education lead for the MACPT should:

- have some past and direct experience working in a school setting (although not necessarily as a teacher)
- be skilled and experienced in school safeguarding at a senior level
- understand the wider multi-agency safeguarding landscape

DSLs might have the most relevant expertise for this role. Examples of the requirements of the education MACPT member included in pathfinder role descriptions include:

- extensive safeguarding expertise, with significant experience working with children and families in education, focusing on wellbeing and child protection
- proven ability to make critical decisions in complex child protection and ensure statutory responsibilities are met
- ability to audit and review schools' safeguarding systems, ensuring compliance and resolving issues effectively
- in-depth knowledge of multi-agency safeguarding, including key legislation and guidance such as [Keeping children safe in education](#), [Working together to safeguard children](#) and [section 175 of the Education Act \(2002\)](#)

Local discretion for other practitioners within the MACPT

The bill allows safeguarding partners to include other practitioners, agencies and organisations to form part of the MACPT, so that these teams are able to respond to local harm and need profiles.

Prescribed skills, competencies or experience for these practitioners will be for safeguarding partners to determine, supported by statutory guidance and other competency frameworks.

Power to make regulations designating the relevant agencies that may be required to work with safeguarding

partners to facilitate the operation of the MACPT

What is the regulation making power and how will it be used?

This regulation making power gives the Secretary of State discretion to designate a subset of relevant agencies – already prescribed in secondary legislation^{[\[footnote 6\]](#)} – that will be under a duty to enter into a co-operation memorandum if they are notified to do so by safeguarding partners.

The locally agreed memorandum will set out how the relevant agency and safeguarding partners, through their MACPT, will work together for the purposes of supporting the local authority to discharge its duties under section 47 of the Children Act 1989.

This will be in line with their statutory responsibilities and obligations and might include how an agency is required to share information to support decisions about significant harm. Safeguarding partners are only required to work with these relevant agencies if it supports the MACPT operation. Specifying which relevant agencies are considered key to multi-agency child protection activity in regulations will bring national consistency.

It is possible that the range of agencies will vary over time, as we understand more about how MACPTs operate and which agencies they need to engage with to deliver their day-to-day functions.

These agencies do not have to provide dedicated resource for MACPTs and the regulations setting out the requirements of the MACPT members will not apply to practitioners from the relevant agencies.

Relevant agencies in scope of these powers

The 39 agencies in scope are specified in the [Child Safeguarding Practice Review and Relevant Agency \(England\) Regulations 2018](#). It is not the intention that all of these will be included. Those specified would only need to enter a co-operation

memorandum if notified by safeguarding partners to do so – co-operation memorandums are not automatic.

Proposed regulations will not prevent agencies that are not in scope of co-operation memorandums or which are, but do not have a co-operation memorandum in place, from engaging with MACPTs. The 8 agencies most likely to be specified in regulations are:

Probation Service

The Probation Service supervises offenders subject to court-imposed sentences, including adult perpetrators of abuse. Insights into an offender's behaviour, compliance with court orders, family circumstances and risk assessments are crucial in decisions about significant harm. This might include implementing interventions to support change or restrictions designed to protect children, sharing information about progress or breaches that may signal increased likelihood of harm.

Domestic abuse is identified as the main factor in a third of child protection cases and probation can play an important role when a perpetrator is known to them.

Youth Offending Teams (YOTs), secure colleges, training centres, young offender institutions

These support young people in, or at risk of entering, the criminal justice system. Such young people are likely to be both perpetrators and victims of crime and exploitation and may have unsettled home lives. These organisations can provide valuable insights about a child's behaviour, peer associations, family dynamics and involvement in extra familial harm, such as gang involvement.

British Transport Police (BTP)

BTP plays a key role in identifying and responding to child exploitation, particularly county lines, trafficking and children going missing. It can map the likelihood of harm and coordinate safeguarding responses across regions.

Charities working with children and their families

Charities can form close, trusted relationships and play an important role engaging and supporting marginalised groups and those who distrust statutory services. They provide advocacy and specialist support, which can be critical in ensuring a child is protected and the family is able to participate and engage effectively in the child protection process.

Religious organisations

Religious organisations can play a trusted and supportive role in children and families' lives. These organisations may bring important insights into a child's day-to-

day life and family situation and offer cultural or religious perspective that can strengthen multi-agency understanding and decision-making.

Schools and further education institutions

Educational settings are a key protective environment for many children. Teachers and teaching staff are often the first to notice changes in a child's behaviour, attendance and wellbeing, and play a central role in identifying abuse, exploitation or neglect. Designated safeguarding leads would be able to provide detailed records of concerns and disclosures.

Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) and alternative provision

PRUs provide education for children who cannot go to a mainstream school. For these children, there can sometimes be an increased likelihood of harm, including criminal exploitation.

As in schools, staff will have detailed knowledge of behavioural issues and safeguarding concerns and can support with the identification of abuse, exploitation or neglect.

NHS trusts and foundation trusts

These are the main organisations that deliver health services directly to the public. Staff will have at least a basic level of training on safeguarding and can help to identify and escalate safeguarding concerns.

Further consultation on this will include whether to prescribe Children's homes, Children centres and nurseries in the regulations.

What will be included in statutory guidance

We will consider how we strengthen the statutory guidance [Keeping children safe in education](#), which already sets out expectations and requirements for relevant agencies, to provide clarity on how they work with MACPTs to support the effective delivery of multi-agency child protection.

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1. A 5-year Department for Education (DfE) programme, set up to support local authorities to improve their work with families to safely reduce the number of children entering care. [↪](#)
 2. Carried out by University College London and Newcastle University. [↪](#)

3. Requires local authorities to investigate actual or likely significant harm. [↵](#)
4. The Child Safeguarding Practice Review and Relevant Agency (England) Regulations 2018 specifies the relevant agencies that safeguarding partners may choose to work with as part of their arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in their local authority area. [↵](#)
5. DfE has consulted on replacing these with standards that are clearer on the professional outcomes expected of social workers. [↵](#)
6. Child Safeguarding Practice Review and Relevant Agency (England) Regulations 2018. [↵](#)

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