



# One minute guide

## Working Together to Safeguard Children

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### What is Working Together to Safeguard Children?

[Working Together to Safeguard Children](#) (usually referred to as just Working Together) is statutory guidance produced by the government which outlines how practitioners working with children, young people and families should work together in order to ensure that children and young people remain safe from harm. In this guidance, a child is defined as anybody under the age of eighteen; though the guidance does also apply to the safeguarding of unborn children. Working Together is pivotal to delivering the proposals set out in [Children's Social Care: Stable Homes, Built on Love](#), which is the government's response to the [Independent Review of Children's Social Care](#), carried out by Josh MacAllister and published in 2022.

### Why do we have Working Together?

The Working Together statutory guidance was initially published in 1999, and set out how all agencies and professionals should work together to promote children's welfare and protect them from abuse and neglect. It was revised in 2006 following the public inquiry into the death of Victoria Climbié.

Victoria was brought to the UK from the Ivory Coast in 1999 by her great aunt, and died in Haringey in February 2000 at the age of eight. She had sustained a number of serious injuries, and had been tied up for significant periods of time. Before her death, Victoria had been in contact with numerous different agencies, but the investigation found that none of these agencies had fully investigated and, due to a lack of information sharing between them, none had a full picture of the abuse Victoria was suffering.

In response to Victoria's death, the government commissioned a public inquiry, led by [Lord Laming](#). The findings of the inquiry led to the government's Every Child Matters green paper, which proposed changes in legislation and policy to maximise opportunities for agencies to work together in order to effectively safeguard children. This green paper became the [Children Act \(2004\)](#). The Children Act (2004) placed a duty on all agencies to make arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, and in 2006 the revised version of Working Together was published.

Since 2006, there have been seven further updates to the guidance. In 2010, the update expanded the focus on interagency working and took into account the recommendations of Lord Laming's 2008 progress report [The Protection of Children in England](#), which emphasised the importance of frontline practitioners getting to know children as individuals. The 2013 update was in response to the review of child protection in England, carried out by [Professor Eileen Munro](#). The update in 2015 focused on the need for Early Help responses to identify and support the needs of children and young people as these needs emerge and are identified.

The 2018 update continued a focus on the need for early help, but also focused on complex and contextual safeguarding as well as a review of how local safeguarding arrangements are implemented and governed following a review of Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs) by Sir Alan Wood in 2017. There was a limited factual update in 2020.

## What changes were made in the 2023 Working Together update?

In addition to simple factual updates (e.g. to include references to legislation published or changes to guidance and procedures since the last update), the 2023 update includes some substantive changes to the content; though it should be noted that no statutory roles or functions have been removed from the guidance.

The 2023 update begins with a new chapter, titled 'A Shared Responsibility'. This brings together new and existing guidance to emphasise that successful outcomes for children depend upon strong multi-agency partnership working. The chapter includes principles for working with parents and carers which focus on the importance of building positive and trusting relationships and expectations for multi-agency working that apply to all individuals, agencies and organisations working with children, young people and families.

The second chapter, on multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, strengthens how those arrangements (between local authorities, police forces and integrated care boards, or ICBs, in health) work to safeguard and protect children locally. Changes include clarity around the safeguarding responsibilities of senior leaders, as well as emphasising the role of education in safeguarding arrangements and encouraging agencies to include third sector organisations within their arrangements and safeguarding work.

The third chapter covers the provision of help, support and protection. The early help section strengthens the role of education and childcare settings in safeguarding and support, including information on a child's right to education and potential indicators that a child or family may benefit from early help support. This section also emphasises the importance of family networks and their inclusion in family decision making, including the use of Family Group Conferences.

One of the most significant changes in this chapter, which states that a broader range of practitioners can be the lead practitioner for children and families receiving support and services under section 17 of the Children Act 1989; that is, children receiving Child in Need support and/ or on a Child in Need plan. Previously, the lead practitioner for these cases could only be a social worker; in the new guidance, this role can be undertaken by other practitioners, but they would need to be supervised by a manager who is social work qualified. The new guidance states that local authorities and their partners need to agree and set out local governance arrangements in relation to this. Children's services partners in Leeds, including the Leeds Safeguarding Children Partnership, are looking at how this significant change can most effectively be implemented locally, as it will need a clear strategic structure to support it.

The child protection section of this chapter introduces new national multi-agency child protection standards. It also clarifies the expected multi-agency response to risks of abuse and exploitation outside the home, and the consideration of whether children are experiencing risks outside the home in all children's social care assessments.

### For more information

Practitioners should familiarise themselves with the updated version of the Working Together guidance which can be viewed in full [here](#), with a summary of changes outlined [here](#).

Alongside the Working Together update, the government also published the Children's Social Care National Framework, which is statutory guidance for local authorities setting out the purpose, principles for practice and expected outcomes of children's social care. It is available [here](#).