

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026

A guide for parents, carers and families



What this guide will help you understand

What the national guidance is, why it matters, how services should work with your family, and what you and your child should expect.



A note about language



In this guide, “professionals” or “practitioners” means people who work with children and families. This can include several people including social workers, children and family workers, teachers, designated safeguarding leads, early years practitioners. Health visitors, school nurses, nurses, midwives, doctors, GPs, and mental health practitioners. Police officers, family liaison officers, youth workers, housing officers, sports coaches, voluntary and community sector workers, and faith or community leaders, and more. “Services” means the organisations they work for.

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1. Introduction

You may hear professionals talking about [Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026](#), often shortened to WTSC 2026. This is national statutory guidance that explains how everyone who works with children should work together to help, support, and protect them. It is used by organisations such as schools, nurseries, health services, GPs, hospitals, children’s social care, police, youth justice services, and voluntary and community groups. The guidance sets out how services should identify when children and families need help, provide support at the earliest opportunity, and work together to keep children safe when there are concerns about their welfare.



Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026



Who is a child?

A child is anyone under the age of 18. This includes babies, children, and teenagers. The guidance also recognises the importance of supporting families before a baby is born.



Working Together applies to all children and young people, including those living with parents, wider family members or kinship carers, children who are adopted, and children in care. The guidance recognises that children are usually best supported within their families and communities wherever it is safe and in their best interests.

2. What is Working Together based on?

Working Together to Safeguard Children is national statutory guidance produced by the Department for Education on behalf of the Government. It is based on laws designed to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, including the Children Act 1989 and the Children Act 2004.



The guidance is updated to reflect changes in legislation, research, learning from child safeguarding reviews, and evidence about what helps children, young people and families achieve the best outcomes.

- **Research and evidence about child development, safeguarding, and family support.**
- Learning from serious child safeguarding incidents and reviews.
- **National policy and legislation.**
- Evidence and knowledge from organisations and professionals working with children and families.

3. Why do we need Working Together?

Children and families often receive support from several services. This can be for a few reasons. Perhaps there is a new baby in the family, or someone who is ill and requires medical help; children are attending school or college or belong to a group or club.

Working Together helps these organisations understand their responsibilities and work together effectively, so that families receive the right help at the right time, concerns are recognised early, and children are protected when they are at risk of harm.

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026



What the guidance is intended to do



Help families receive support early; improve cooperation between organisations; make sure children are listened to; strengthen support from family networks; promote children's safety, wellbeing and development; and protect children from abuse, neglect, exploitation and other harm.

4. Why have we created this guide?

Working Together is written mainly for professionals and contains detailed information about laws, responsibilities, and safeguarding processes. We have created this family-friendly guide to explain what it means in everyday practice.

- **What support children and families should expect.**
- How services should work with families.
- **How families should be involved and kept informed.**
- How children are helped, supported, and protected.

5. Ten Things Parents and Carers should know from Working Together

1

Children are usually best supported within their family

Wherever it is safe and, in a child's best interests, children should grow up within their own family and wider support network. Services should build on family strengths and consider how relatives, close family friends and other trusted people can help.



2

Children must be listened to

Professionals should understand a child's wishes, feelings, experiences, and daily life. Children communicate in different ways and should be heard in ways that suit their age, development, and individual needs. Professionals such as teachers, youth workers, social workers, GPs, and coaches should take time to understand a child's wishes, feelings, and experiences. Children should be able to share their views in ways that work for them, taking account of their age, understanding, communication needs and any disabilities.



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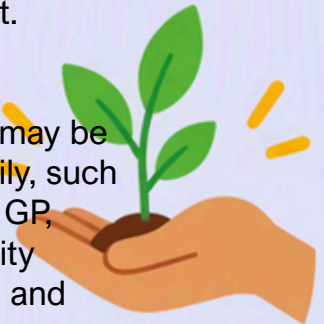


5. Ten Things Parents and Carers should know from Working Together.

3

Families should receive help early

Families should not have to wait until problems reach crisis point. Support is available for emotional wellbeing, behaviour, school attendance, family relationships, parenting, financial difficulties, domestic abuse, substance use, or additional needs. Early help may be provided by people and services already involved with your family, such as a teacher, Children and Families worker, health visitor, nurse, GP, youth worker, early years practitioner, or voluntary and community organisation. They can help identify what support may be useful and make sure children receive the right help at the right time.



4

Family Help is about working with families

Family Help brings services together to provide coordinated support centred on the family's strengths and needs. In most situations, it is provided with the family's agreement and involvement. Accepting early support does not automatically mean involvement with services such as children's social care.



5

You should be treated with respect and kept informed

Families should receive respectful, non-blaming, and clear communication. You should be helped to understand concerns, plans and decisions, and supported to take part. Wherever possible, there should be no unexpected decisions or surprises.



6

Families should help shape solutions

Families should be involved in finding solutions and making plans. This may include wider family members and trusted adults through family meetings or family group decision-making. The aim is to work alongside families, not simply make decisions for them.



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5. Ten Things Parents and Carers should know from Working Together.

7

Professionals may need to share information

Different services may need to share relevant information to understand a child's situation and provide the right support. Professionals should normally be open with families about this unless doing so could place a child or another person at greater risk.



8

Safeguarding includes online safety, domestic abuse and other risks

Children may experience neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, domestic abuse, exploitation, bullying, online harm or harm outside the family home. Children may face several difficulties at the same time, so professionals should understand the whole picture.



9

Every child and family should be treated fairly

Safeguarding should be anti-discriminatory and anti-racist. Support should be inclusive, fair and accessible, and should respect a child's and family's identity, culture, language, disability, faith, and lived experience. Children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities have the same right to be safe, happy, healthy and listened to as every other child. They may receive support from teachers, Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators, school nurses, therapists, social workers, GPs and other health services, who should work together with families to make sure children receive the help they need. Some children may face additional barriers to communicating their wishes or reporting worries, and professionals should take this into account.



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5. Ten Things Parents and Carers should know from Working Together.

10

Some children need extra protection

If professionals believe a child may be suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm, organisations have a legal duty to act. This may involve assessments, information gathering, meetings, and child protection processes. Families should still be involved and treated openly wherever possible.

When there are concerns that a child is being harmed, neglected or may be at risk of significant harm, professionals such as social workers, police officers, teachers, Designated Safeguarding Leads, nurses, doctors and other health professionals may work together to understand the concerns, assess risk and decide what support or protection is needed. The aim is always to keep children safe and support families wherever possible.



6. A special focus on babies

Working Together, 2026 highlights the needs and experiences of babies and unborn children. Babies are especially vulnerable because they cannot tell others when something is wrong or ask for help.

Professionals should identify concerns as early as possible during pregnancy and early years, so that families can receive support and planning at the earliest opportunity.



Why early support matters

Support during pregnancy and a child's earliest years can help protect their safety, health, development, and future wellbeing



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7. Key messages for families

The main message

Children do best when families, communities and professionals work together, listen to children, provide help early, build on family strengths, and act quickly when children need protection.



As a parent or carer, you should expect services to:

- Listen to you and your child.
- Treat your family with dignity and respect.
- Work together effectively.
- Offer support as early as possible.
- Involve you in decisions and keep you informed.
- Build on your family's strengths.
- Put your child's wellbeing and safety at the centre of their work.



Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026

A guide to multi-agency working to help, protect and promote the welfare of children

March 2026

[Click the image to read the full version](#)

Final thought

Every family needs support at times. Keeping children safe and helping them thrive is a shared responsibility. By working together, listening to children, supporting families early and building strengths, services and families can help every child grow up safe, healthy and supported.



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8. Further information and Support

These trusted resources provide more information about Working Together, safeguarding and support for families.

[Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026, GOV.UK](#)

Full national guidance and supporting documents.

[Working Together to Safeguard Children, NYSCP](#)

A North Yorkshire Safeguarding Partnership (NYSCP) overview and local updates.

[Illustrated guide for children, young people and families](#)

A visual guide explaining how organisations work together.

[Animated guide for children and young people](#)

A short Department for Education video.

[Working Together 2026 NYSCP update video](#)

An overview of the 2026 guidance from NYSCP.

[The North Yorkshire Safeguarding Children Partnership \(NYSCP\) Website](#)

Information for Parents and Carers

[NSPCC support for parents](#)

Practical safeguarding advice and support from the NSPCC.

[NSPCC online safety](#)

Advice to help families keep children safe online.

[Childline](#)

Free, confidential support for children and young people. [Telephone 0800 1111](tel:08001111).

[Family Lives](#)

Advice and support for families. Helpline 0808 800 2222.

Contact

North Yorkshire Safeguarding Children Partnership
County Hall,
Northallerton
DL7 8AE

www.safeguardingchildren.co.uk
email: nyscp@northyorks.gov.uk

Telephone: 01609 535123

If you have safeguarding concerns about a child click [here](#) to view the [worried about a child page](#)



Happy



Healthy



Safe



Achieving