

Working Together to Safeguard Children is the statutory guidance on multi-agency working to help, support and protect children. This guidance was updated in March 2026 to align with children's social care reforms and translate learning from child safeguarding practice reviews into clearer practice expectations. The guidance applies to all practitioners who have safeguarding responsibility to children, including those working in adult services.

#### Resources and support:

- [LSCP Level 3 Training](#)
- [LSCP Policy, Procedure and Guidance](#)
- [LSCP Factsheets](#)

**Structural change and the Families First reforms:** the system of help, support and protection should respond flexibly and wrap support around families at the point of need. Different tiers of support are outlined:

1. Universal services and community-based early help
2. Family help (targeted early help and child in need)
3. Multi-agency child protection teams

#### Responding to risk outside the home:

- Practitioners must recognise early indicators like children missing from education, home or placement, children who receive unexplained gifts / new possessions or children who may be a victim or drawn into crime.
- Children with SEND, missing children, looked after children and children with previous experience of abuse and neglect are explicitly recognised as being at greater risk.
- Safeguarding assessments should include residential care staff or foster carers where appropriate.
- Responses should consider referrals to statutory or non-statutory services and make use of the [Child Exploitation Disruption Toolkit](#).

#### Updated definitions of abuse:

- Abuse – definition now includes teenage relationship abuse, honour-based abuse and faith-based abuse. The impact of coercive and controlling behaviour is formally recognised.
- Child sexual abuse - definition now includes abuse in the family setting (including online child sexual abuse material produced in family settings), cybergrooming and self-generated sexual content produced under coercion. Safeguarding assessments for suspected child sexual abuse must now include an experienced health representative.
- Extra-familial harm – definition now includes harm outside of homes children live in (including children's homes and foster homes) and highlights that the harm may be perpetrated or facilitated by individuals or groups.
- Practitioners must be aware that a child may be experiencing multiple harms at the same time



**Enhanced focus on babies, unborn children and children not living with their families:** the following expectations are introduced for practitioners:

- To recognise the specific vulnerability of babies and maintain child-centred and professionally curious practice which does not over-rely on parent/carer accounts.
- To identify when a pregnant person might need help or support to provide safe and suitable care for their unborn child.
- To ensure every looked after child has a care plan and that practitioners understand the particular vulnerabilities of children in this cohort.

**Anti-racist and anti-discriminatory practice:** is now a core safeguarding expectation.

- Practitioners should challenge racism and discrimination.
- Practitioners should recognise how trauma, racism, discrimination and past experiences with services can affect child and family engagement and adapt their practice accordingly.
- Practitioners must respect the importance of different cultural models of parenting and family life.
- Practitioners must take account of specific needs of children and families, including hidden harms, young parents, fathers or male carers and parents who identify as LGBTQIA.
- Practitioners must mitigate the risk of adultification bias by remaining curious about children's vulnerabilities.