



A summary of “Working together to safeguard children” (2013) including important changes to guidance.





On 15 April 2013 the government released the updated statutory guidance for adults working with children and families in England.

Working together to safeguard children 2013 streamlines previous guidance and clarifies the children's workforces' responsibilities in regards to safeguarding children. It also aims to ensure that the needs of the child and not processes are the key focus of safeguarding practice.

Working together 2013 maintains much of the responsibilities and procedures laid out in the 2010 guidance it replaces but in a more concise and less exhaustive way.

It replaces:

- Working together to safeguard children (2010)
- Framework for the assessment of children in need and their families (2000), and
- Statutory guidance on making arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children under section 11 of the Children Act 2004 (2007).

Introduction

Working together 2013 reaffirms that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and for services to be effective each professional and organisation should play their full part, but adds that for services to be effective they must adopt a child centred approach and be based on a clear understanding of the needs and views of children.

Every area should use these principles to underpin their safeguarding plans. In addition, the guidance asserts that for safeguarding procedures to be effective they must reflect the following:

- the child's needs are paramount, and the needs and wishes of each child, should be put first, so that every child receives the support they need before a problem escalates;
- all professionals who come into contact with children and families are alert to their needs and any risks of harm that individual abusers, or potential abusers, may pose to children;
- all professionals share appropriate information in a timely way and can discuss any concerns about an individual child with colleagues and local authority children's social care;
- high quality professionals are able to use their expert judgement to put the child's needs at the heart of the safeguarding system so that the right solution can be found for each individual child;
- all professionals contribute to whatever actions are needed to safeguard and promote a child's welfare and take part in regularly reviewing the outcomes for the child against specific plans and outcomes;
- LSCBs coordinate the work to safeguard children locally and monitor and challenge the effectiveness of local arrangements;
- When things go wrong Serious Case Reviews (SCRs) are published and transparent about any mistakes which were made so that lessons can be learnt; and
- Local areas innovate and changes are informed by evidence and examination of the data.

Chapter 1: Assessing need and providing help

This section contains guidance on:

- Early help
- Identifying children and families who would benefit from early help
- Effective assessment of the need for early help
- Provision of effective early help services
- Accessing help and services
- Information sharing
- Assessments under the Children Act 1989
- Statutory requirements
- The purpose of assessment
- The principles and parameters of a good assessment
- Focusing on the needs and views of the child
- Developing a clear analysis
- Focusing on outcomes
- Timeliness of assessments
- Commencing child protection proceedings (strategy discussion, section 47 enquiries, initial child protection conference, child protection plan, child protection review conference).

What's Changed:



All LSCBs need to produce and publish a threshold document that outlines how they will deal with: the process for the early help assessment and the type and level of early help services to be provided; and the criteria, including the level of need, for when a case should be referred to local authority children's social care for assessment and for statutory services under section 17 (child in need), section 47 (risk of significant harm), section 31 (care orders), section 20 (duty to accommodate) of the Children Act 1989.

Within one working day of a referral being received, a local authority social worker should make a decision about the type of response that is required and acknowledge receipt to the referrer.

There will no longer be a requirement to conduct separate initial and core assessments but the maximum timeframe for the assessment to conclude, such that it is possible to reach a decision on next steps, should be no longer than 45 working days from the point of referral.

Depending on the needs of the individual child, and the nature and level of any risk of harm faced by the child, the assessment may need to be done more quickly.

Local authorities, with their partners, should develop and publish local protocols for assessment.



Chapter 2: Organisational responsibilities

Section 11 of the Children Act 2004 places a specific duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children on schools and colleges, early years and childcare, health services, police, adult social care services, housing authorities, British Transport Police, Prison Service, Probation Service, secure estate for children, Youth Offending Teams, United Kingdom Border Agency, CAFCASS, armed services, voluntary and private sectors and faith organisations.

Chapter 3: Local Safeguarding Children Boards

This section contains guidance on:

- Statutory objectives and functions of LSCBs
- LSCB membership
- LSCB chair, accountability and resourcing
- Information Sharing.

What's Changed:



Every LSCB should appoint an independent chair.



Chapter 4: Learning and improvement framework

This section contains guidance on:

- Principles for learning and improvement
- Serious case reviews including requirements around publication
- National panel of independent experts on serious case reviews.

What's changed:



Local Safeguarding Children boards need to maintain local learning and improvement frameworks for organisations that work with children and their families.

Reviews should be held on cases that can provide important lessons about how local organisations can improve working together to safeguard promote the welfare of children, not just those that meet statutory requirements.

The different types of review include:

- Serious Case Review - where abuse or neglect is believed to be a factor (statutory requirement)
- Child death review - a review of all child deaths up to the age of 18 (statutory requirement)
- Review of a child protection incident which falls below the threshold for an SCR; and
- Review or audit of practice in one or more agencies.

The guidance on when a Serious Case Review should be carried out emphasises that if a child dies by suspected suicide an SCR must be initiated.

LSCBs may use any learning model which is consistent with the principles in the guidance, including the systems methodology recommended by Professor Munro.

The requirement for organisations to undertake Individual Management Reviews has been removed. However any review process must still include appropriate representation from other organisations, they may also be required to submit written information about their involvement with the child who is subject to the review.

Final reports of SCRs findings must be published on the LSCB's website for a minimum of 12 months. The reports should provide a sound analysis of what happened in the case, and why, and what needs to happen in order to reduce the risk of recurrence; be written in plain English and in a way that can be easily understood by professionals and the public alike; and be suitable for publication without needing to be amended or redacted.

A national panel of experts will be created to advise LSCBs on the initiation and publication of serious case reviews. The panel will also report to the government on the efficacy of the serious case review system in general.



Chapter 5: Child death reviews

This section contains guidance on:

- Responsibilities of the LSCB
- Responsibilities of relevant bodies in relation to child deaths
- Responsibilities of Child Death Overview Panels
- Definition of preventable child deaths; action by professionals when a child died unexpectedly
- Involvement of the coroner and pathologist.

Appendix A: Glossary

Includes definitions of: children; safeguarding; types of abuse; young carers.

Appendix B: Statutory framework

Includes legislation relevant to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

Appendix C: Further sources of information

Includes a list of supplementary guidance on particular safeguarding issues published by: the Department of Education; other government departments and agencies; and non-governmental organisations.

References

HM Government (2013) Working together to safeguard children: A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children (PDF). London: Department for Education (DfE).

Children Act 1989.

Children Act 2004.

About us

Since 2006 the Safeguarding Children e-Academy has grown in to a member focused training community of 72 UK organisations, including LSCBs from across England and Wales.

Our ethos of collaborative development has led to a large portfolio of over 40 safeguarding and child protection courses that have been enjoyed by over 350,000 learners.



For regular safeguarding updates follow us on

twitter at twitter.com/SafeguardingEA

Visit www.safeguardingchildren.co.uk to find more safeguarding resources.