



Department
for Education

Improving help and child protection: revised framework (Children and young person's version)

Government consultation on updating Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026, the Children's Social Care National Framework 2026 and policy underpinning the development of multi-agency child protection team regulations

Launch date 22 June 2026

Respond by 4 September 2026

Introduction

We're asking for everyone's views on changes to statutory guidance for children who need help, support and protection. This includes '[Working Together to Safeguard Children](#)' and the '[Children's Social Care National Framework](#)' which tell different people how to work together if children and young people need help, support, protection or care. We might also use your answers to change the law.

This is a guide for children and young people and tells you about the changes we are planning.

If you'd like more information, you can also read the introduction to the full consultation document about the [planned changes](#).

Your views are important and we want to hear them. They will make sure our changes do what all children and young people need them to do.

What is 'Working Together'?

'Working Together to Safeguard Children' (usually just called 'Working Together') is a guide for all the different people who should work together if you need help, support or protection. It explains what is expected of them, and what they have to do to make sure you are listened to. It also tells them how they can help you understand what help and support you can get.

In Working Together, when we say 'children' we mean anyone who has not yet had their 18th birthday.

A *local authority* is a part of local government. Local authorities make decisions about things that happen in a community, including how to support children and keep you safe.

When we talk about a '*safeguarding partner*', or '*practitioners and professionals who work for safeguarding partners*', we mean people who work in local authorities, health and the police.

When we talk about a '*child and family social worker*', we mean a person who usually works for a local authority and whose job it is to help and listen to children and their families and make decisions to help them, which might include plans about how to keep children safe.

When we talk about '*practitioners*', we mean anyone who works with children and their families. This includes teachers, police officers, doctors, nurses, social workers, youth workers and others.

What is the Children's Social Care National Framework?

The Children's Social Care National Framework (usually called the National Framework) is a guide that tells everyone involved in supporting children and young people what children's social care is supposed to achieve and how it should work.

The purpose of the National Framework is to clearly explain what you should expect from the help, support, protection and care you receive. You can use it to be sure the support you get is good enough, and you can speak out if you don't think it is.

In the National Framework '*children's social care*' refers to the different kinds of support that children, young people and their families receive from their local authorities when they need extra help.

In the National Framework we ask children's social care to help your family stay together, keep you safe, support your family network and give you a stable loving home.

Things to do as you read this guide

We'd like you to tell us what you think about our planned changes to Working Together and the National Framework.

As you're reading this guide, you may want to:

- think about your own opinions of the changes
- talk to other children and young people or adults about your opinions
- think about what could be done to make the changes happen

If you're reading the guide in a group, you may want to:

- talk about which changes you think are the most important
- imagine some situations in which those changes could make a difference to children and young people's lives
- share ideas about the things we could do to make the changes happen

We want to hear from lots of different children and young people so we can understand and take note of what they think about our plans and so that we can make sure that all children get the help, support and protection they need, wherever you live in England and whatever your family situation. There is also a consultation for all the people who work with children and their families, which you can read [here](#).

Support if you need it

If there's anything here that you do not understand, you can ask an adult to explain it to you. This could be a parent or carer, a social worker, a teacher or another adult you trust.

If you're worried about anything you read, talk to an adult about it. You can speak to someone you know in person or use one of the services listed below who are there to help you.

[ChildLine](#) can offer safe, confidential help with any worry 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. You can use the one-to-one chat on their website or call them free on 0800 1111.

[Help at Hand](#) can offer advice and information, as well as support with any difficulties you may be facing, if you're in care, living away from home or a care leaver. You can call them free on 0800 528 0731.

If you're being harmed or hurt in any way, or you know another child who is, tell a teacher, a nurse, a social worker (if you have one) or another adult you trust straightaway. It's their job to help keep you and other children safe.

Planned changes

Section 1: Voice of children, young people and their families

Children and families have important things to say about the help and services they get, and it is important that adults listen to them. One of the main ideas in how children's services should work is that children are asked what they think and feel, and that their views are listened to and acted on wherever possible. Children should be involved in decisions about their own lives.

Working Together and the National Framework explain that adults and organisations who help and support children and keep them safe should make sure children's and families' voices are included in how services are planned and checked.

In *Working Together* this includes showing how children's views are included in public plans, which are reports that safeguarding partners write every year about what they have been doing to help children, and how independent people talk to children to help check that services are doing a good job.

In the National Framework this includes building relationships with children and young people and their families to understand what is most important to them and including them in meetings where decisions are made about their lives.

Right now, children and families are not always fully involved in checking how safeguarding services work. Some areas mostly use feedback collected by other professionals, rather than talking directly with children and families. Sometimes young people who are meant to help check services are not clearly involved or supported to make a real difference. It can also be hard to make sure all children are included which makes some children feel left out or ignored. This means that some children's experiences are not always used to improve services and then services don't always make the changes that some groups of children really need.

We want to make things better. We plan to make clearer rules so that adults and organisations show how children's real-life experiences help shape decisions and improve services. We also want more fair, organised and welcoming ways for children and young people to share their views, including helping you to be listened to by people who don't work for the organisations but are there to check everything is working as it should be. This will help make sure children are not just heard, but that what they say leads to real differences in getting them the help they need and keeping them safe.

Section 2: Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements

Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements

Keeping children safe works best when different adults and organisations work together. This can include schools, doctors or nurses, social workers and the police. Each of them has an important job to do to help families and protect children. The way these adults and organisations work together is called multi-agency safeguarding arrangements.

To make this work well, adults need to talk to each other, make good decisions quickly and take responsibility for making a situation better. In each local area, senior leaders from the council, health and the police are responsible for making sure this teamwork keeps children safe and supported.

Working Together explains who does what. Some adults are in charge of setting the big plans and deciding what the most important things to do are, while others are responsible for making sure the work happens day to day. This helps make sure the right decisions are made at the right level, and importantly at the right time.

Sometimes though, this can be confusing. In some places it works well, but in others it's not clear what the people who are doing the checks should do: they don't always have enough information, or they can't make sure the right changes are made. This can make it harder to keep children safe.

We want to make things clearer by:

- explaining what independent scrutiny should do – this is when someone who doesn't work for any of the organisations comes to take a careful look at what is happening and to make sure everyone is doing what they should to help children and keep them safe;
- making sure independent scrutiny can work freely and see the information needed – this means that those people who are checking that everything is being done properly can speak to people, read reports and look at the numbers that tell them who has been given help and support and how many children needed protection;
- helping independent scrutiny challenge and report concerns clearly – this means helping those people to ask difficult questions and to say when they don't think things are going very well and then asking what the organisations that work together are going to do about it. Sometimes this means talking to the person in charge;
- making reports more open and easier to understand – this means making sure that everyone can understand what is good in an area and what could be better. It might include using pictures or telling stories about individual children to explain how a service helped them (although it would never include the child's real name).

These changes will help make sure children are helped and protected well, wherever they live.

Section 3: Help and support

Family Help

The government wants to make sure children and families get help earlier, instead of having to wait until problems get worse. The aim is to help families as soon as they need support and in a way that helps them best.

To do this, a new way of helping families called Family Help has been introduced across the country. Family Help is about making support simpler and more joined-up, so families are not being passed between different workers. Wherever possible, families should work with the same adult – who might get other adults to help too - and have one clear plan that everyone follows.

Family Help has brought together two kinds of support that used to be separate:

- Early help, for families who need extra support

- Child in Need support, for children who need more help, support and protection

Even though these were called different things before, many children in both groups actually get very similar help in real life. They often have the same kind of plan, the same type of person working with them and the same team of adults helping them.

Because of this, keeping the two types of help separate can sometimes make things more confusing. Children may have to repeat themselves, wait longer, or meet new workers, which can feel frustrating or upsetting.

The government's idea is to treat all Family Help support in one clear and consistent way, using the same rules for everyone. This would help make sure support is fair, joined-up and easier to understand, wherever a child lives.

Family Networks

Children often have lots of people in their family who care about them and want to keep them safe. When families need help and support or children need protection from harm, it's important that family members can be part of the conversation and make suggestions about how they could help. Our idea is that other family members should be asked to help, whenever this is safe to do so and when it means that a child can stay at home and get the help and support they need.

Section 4: Protection

Multi-Agency Child Protection Teams

Keeping children safe works best when different adults work together, are really good at what they do, understand what children need and have enough time and support to act when something is wrong.

In the past, when the government or the local authority has looked at when things went wrong and children were sometimes not kept safe this was because:

- adults didn't share information properly or make decisions together
- some people working with children and families didn't yet have enough experience
- the system didn't work well when children were harmed outside their home
- families didn't always feel listened to or supported

Because of this, the government plans to set up multi-agency child protection teams (MACPTs) everywhere. These teams will bring together experts from social workers, people who work in health, education and the police to make important decisions when children might be seriously harmed.

These teams are meant to:

- help professionals decide quickly if a child is in danger
- make sure adults who know what to do are in charge
- share information clearly
- create and check plans to keep children safe
- listen to and help families to make children safe as quickly as possible

The government is now asking people what they think about how these teams should work, what skills the adults should have and which organisations should be involved. What people say will help shape the rules that explain how MACPTs protect children.

Section 5: Improving outcomes

Children who live in foster or residential care, and young people leaving care, do not always have strong, caring relationships with adults in their family, or with friends.

Sometimes this has been because adults aren't safe to spend time with, but sometimes this is because social workers and carers haven't been helped to make sure that there is time to build these relationships.

For children and young people, it can make a big difference if you have one trusted, caring adult in your life. These people can give children and young people comfort, trust, kindness and be someone who really listens and sticks around. When children and young people have this, they are more likely to do well at school, feel healthier, be safer and cope better when life is hard.

The government has said that all children and young people who are in care or are leaving care and become care leavers should be helped to keep and build important relationships with people they care about, like family members, carers, friends, or other trusted adults.

The National Framework tells social workers and personal advisors (who are people who support young people leaving care), as well as their bosses, how to help make sure that this happens for all children and young people.

The guide explains what adults should do at different times, such as:

- when a child first comes into care
- while they are living in care
- when they are getting ready to live more independently as adults

The aim now is to make sure that building lasting, caring relationships is at the top of the list, and that adults are clear about how to help this happen. We want to hear your views on what needs to happen to make this possible.

The government is also asking whether the National Framework should have different chapters of the guide to those it has now: one about children in care and one about care leavers. At the moment, it has one chapter that tells social workers and personal advisors what to do, but it could have separate chapters. They want to make sure the guide really reflects what children and young people need and what helps most.

Questions about ‘Working Together 2027’

We’d like you to answer the following questions on our planned changes to ‘Working Together’. Please do not include any personal information about yourself or other people in your answers

Question 1: Voice of children, young people and families

What do you think helps children and families tell the people working with them what they really need from the people and organisations helping them?

Question 2: Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements

How do you think people in charge of the big decisions about local services should work together to keep children safe?

Question 3: Help and support

If you needed help, what would make it easier for you to get the help you need?

Question 4: Family networks

How could your family help you get the support you need?

Question 5: Protection

What makes a grown up feel safe to talk to?

Question 6: Improving outcomes

What would help children and young people to have safe and loving relationships with friends and family when they are in care and how can those who support them help to make that happen?

Question 7: Anything else

Is there anything else you would like to tell us about the changes we want to make in *Working Together* and/or the *National Framework*?

About you questions:

Would you like us to keep your response private?

- Yes
- No

Which of the following best describes you?

- I am looked after by a local authority (in care)
- I am a care leaver
- I have received help or support from children's social care
- I have been involved in child protection or safeguarding processes
- Someone in my family has received help or support from children's social care
- None of the above
- Prefer not to say

How old are you? Choose one of the following:

- under 11
- 11-13
- 14-16
- 17-18
- 19-25
- prefer not to say

Which region do you live in?

- North East
- North West
- Yorkshire and the Humber
- East Midlands
- West Midlands
- East of England
- London
- South East
- South West
- Prefer not to say

What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Non-binary
- Prefer to self-describe:
- Prefer not to say

What is your ethnic group?

- White
- Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups
- Asian or Asian British
- Black, Black British, Caribbean or African
- Other ethnic group
- Prefer not to say

Do you have an impairment, health condition or learning difference that has a substantial or long-term impact on your ability to carry out day-to-day activities?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

What will happen next

We'll read all the answers you give us and think about them carefully. We'll also talk to groups of children and young people about what they think of our plans.

In the autumn of 2026, we'll publish a document showing what everyone told us.

We'll then review the 'Working Together' and 'National Framework' guidance every year to make sure it's accurate and to see what extra changes we may need to make.

We'll keep talking to children and young people as we make changes to find out what they think. We want to make sure that every change makes a positive difference to children's lives.



Department
for Education

© Crown copyright 2026

This publication is licensed under the terms of the Open Government Licence v3.0, except where otherwise stated. To view this licence, visit nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3.

Where we have identified any third-party copyright information, you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

About this publication:

enquiries www.gov.uk/contact-dfe

download www.gov.uk/government/publications

Follow us on X: [@educationgovuk](https://twitter.com/educationgovuk)

Connect with us on Facebook: facebook.com/educationgovuk