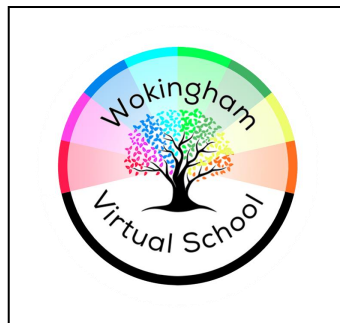


Date: 30 January 2024

WORKING TOGETHER TO SAFEGUARD CHILDREN 2023



Briefing Note

Three documents have been published following consultation. There are no statutory changes and no guidance has been removed.

These can be found as follows:

Main Guidance

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65803fe31c0c2a000d18cf40/Working_together_to_safeguard_children_2023_-_statutory_guidance.pdf

Summary of Changes

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65803ff395bf65000d7191a2/Working_together_to_safeguard_children_2023_-_summary_of_changes.pdf

Statutory Framework

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65797f1e0467eb000d55f689/Working_together_to_safeguard_children_2023_-_statutory_framework.pdf

Multi-Agency Support and expectations – a real emphasis throughout on how agencies can and should work together to provide tailored support for families and build strong relationships.

Paragraphs 26 and 27 (pages 17 and 18), outline the expectations on professionals and practices.

26. Multi-agency expectations for **senior and middle managers** are as follows:

- **Collaborate:** decisions are based on a shared practice approach and constructive debate and analysis of information from all services
- **Learn:** managers ensure their teams have time to engage in peer learning and knowledge exchange, peer audit, group supervision and observation
- **Resource:** managers ensure children receive the holistic support they need, drawing in expertise from a wide range of agencies
- **Include:** managers support staff to identify and challenge discrimination, disparity, and negative stereotypes
- **Mutual challenge:** constructive challenge within and across agencies and disciplines is actively encouraged, independent judgements are valued and given space alongside collective decision-making to avoid groupthink

27. Multi-agency expectations for **direct practice** are as follows:

- **Collaborate:** practitioners working with the same child and family share information to get a complete picture of what life is like for the child. Collectively, they ensure the child's voice is at the centre and the right support is provided
- **Learn:** practitioners learn together by drawing on the best available evidence from their individual fields and sharing their diverse perspectives during regular shared reflection on a child's development, experiences, and outcomes
- **Resource:** practitioners build strong relationships across agencies and disciplines to ensure they support and protect the children with whom they work
- **Include:** practitioners recognise the differences between, and are confident to respond to, circumstances where children experience adversity due to economic and social circumstances and acute family stress, and situations where children face harm due to parental abuse and neglect
- **Mutual challenge:** practitioners challenge themselves and each other, question each other's assumptions, and seek to resolve differences of opinion in a restorative and respectful way

Early Help – a focus on looking at all risk factors for a young person, including those that exist outside the family home. Links to the *Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities: Early Help System Guide March 2022* which separates all levels within the community. This can be found here: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/628de13be90e071f5f7e1bd2/Early_Help_System_Guide.pdf

A Good Assessment – paragraph 196 (page 75), provides an example of what a good assessment should look like.

196. Where children may be experiencing extra-familial harm, children's social care assessments should determine whether a child is in need under section 17 of the Children Act 1989 or whether to make enquires under section 47 of the same Act, following concerns that the child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm⁸⁹. A good assessment should:

- build an understanding of the child's strengths, interests, identity, and culture
- respond to each of the vulnerabilities and/or challenges that the child may be facing, including any within the home
- gather information on past experiences of trauma and how this may impact on the child's current experience of harm and on how they interact with practitioners
- explore how the child's experiences within their families and networks, including their friends and peer groups, interplay with the risk of harm outside of the home and identify what needs to change⁹⁰
- support parents, carers, and family networks to understand what is happening to the child, working with them to ensure they can best meet the child's needs and play an active part in the solutions and processes to help create safety for the child
- understand the risk of extra-familial harm for siblings, for example, where older children are exploited, younger siblings may also be at risk of being targeted

Aim is to ensure that there is a common approach used by professionals and risks inside/outside of the home are assessed as well as ensuring that certain behaviours that may be common in the community are not normalised.

Section 17 – A widening of those that could lead on a Section 17 plan to ensure for the Young Person that it is a professional who is consistent and are ensuring agencies are not working together. There is no expectation for this to be a DSL and the guidance is clear that the person must have time to fulfill this role.

157. The lead practitioner role can be held by a range of people, including social workers. When allocating the lead practitioner, local authorities and their partners should consider the needs of the child and their family to ensure the lead practitioner has the time required to undertake the role. The lead practitioner should have the skills, knowledge, competence, and experience to work effectively with the child and their family. The lead practitioner should always be a social worker for child protection enquiries.

Legal Changes – Update reflects legal changes since 2018 version (and 2020 minor edits), that being, Young Carers now being included in the school census and the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

Appendix B – The highlight of the document! Page 163 onwards provides very helpful links to different topics and resources.

As part of Wokingham Virtual School's commitment to ensuring improved services for children and families who may require further support, the Deputy Headteacher will be working in partnership with Social Care and Schools to improve the current MARF.