

[News story: Strengthened guidance to protect children at risk](#)

Children at risk of abuse or neglect will now be protected through improved partnerships between local police, councils and health services.

Strengthened guidance published today (4 July) sets new legal requirements for the three safeguarding partners, who will be required to make joint safeguarding decisions to meet the needs of local children and families.

Senior police, council and health leaders will jointly be responsible for setting out local plans to keep children safe and will be accountable for how well agencies work together to protect children from abuse and neglect.

The new advice is aimed at all professionals who come in to contact with children and families and includes guidance on current threats to child protection, such as sexual and criminal exploitation, gangs and radicalisation.

Children and Families Minister Nadhim Zahawi said:

We all have a responsibility to promote the welfare of children and protect those at risk of harm. It is important that young people can grow up in an environment that is as safe and stable as we would want for our own children. That's why we have changed the law to create a stronger safeguarding system, placing greater accountability on the key professionals involved so vulnerable children can get the support and protection they deserve.

This guidance will bring health agencies, police forces and councils together to work more collaboratively, making effective decisions that put the needs of local families at the heart of their work.

The Government has also announced 17 areas of the country as 'early adopters', which will work with the National Children's Bureau to implement the new local safeguarding arrangements before they are established across the rest of the country.

The 17 areas include 39 local authorities and will develop new and innovative approaches to set up multi-agency safeguarding processes and produce clear learning which can be shared across other areas, which will have up to a year to publish local arrangements.

The statutory guidance, ['Working Together to Safeguard Children'](#), follows a public consultation on the changes, which received over 700 responses.

In response to the consultation, the requirements on all those working in

sports and faith-based organisations have been strengthened, requiring them to co-operate with the local police, council and health partners where requested. This is in line with the important role these groups play in promoting children's welfare.

The new safeguarding arrangements will replace existing Local Safeguarding Children Boards, taking into account recommendations made in a 2016 review by Sir Alan Wood.

Sir Alan Wood said:

I am delighted that the government has brought forward legislation and guidance to reform the safeguarding arrangements we make for children. I believe the changes will ensure a sharp focus on the key factors of improving multi-agency practice which protects children, create a national learning framework to improve our ability to learn from serious events and introduce a health-led process to maximise potential for learning from child deaths.

I am particularly pleased that the new arrangements ensure that each of the new statutory partners in an area, the police, health and the local authority, now have duties which require them to take joint responsibility for ensuring multi-agency safeguarding arrangements in an area are effective.

The changes include:

- equal duties placed on the police, Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) and local authorities to work together on safeguarding decisions and to promote children's welfare;
- placing greater accountability on senior leaders for each agency: the council Chief Executive, the accounting officer of a CCG and the Chief Officer of Police;
- strengthening expectations on schools and other educational settings that they must co-operate with the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements;
- extending safeguarding responsibilities to sports clubs and religious organisations in recognition of their important role in working with and protecting children and young people;
- new duties on CCGs and councils to carry out reviews of child deaths, instead of children's services, in line with evidence that only a small number of these incidents relate to safeguarding concerns; and
- better reviews of complex or nationally-important cases, and improving identification of the lessons learnt from these, led by the new Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel chaired by Edward Timpson and replacing Serious Case Reviews.

Further info:

- The 17 successful bids to adopt the new local safeguarding arrangements early are: Thameside; Northumberland, Gateshead, Newcastle on Tyne, North

Tyneside, South Tyneside & Sunderland; Calderdale; North Lincolnshire; York; Hertfordshire; Bexley, Greenwich & Lewisham; Brent, Ealing, Hammersmith & Fulham, Harrow, Hillingdon, Hounslow , Kensington & Chelsea & Westminster; Reading, West Berkshire & Wokingham; Devon, Plymouth & Torbay; Wiltshire; Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall & Wolverhampton; Birmingham; Stoke-on-Trent & Staffordshire; Solihull; Trafford; and Salford.