January 2024

Briefing note to Governors

ROCHDALE BOROUGH COUNCIL

WORKING TOGETHER TO SAFEGUARD CHILDREN 2023

Statutory Guidance:

- Working Together to safeguard children 2023
- Working together to safeguard children - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

The Department for Education (DfE) published a new edition of its statutory guidance Working together to Safeguard Children in December 2023. This 2023 edition replaces Working together to safeguard children 2018, which underwent a limited factual update in 2020. The guidance outlines what organisations and agencies must and should do to help, protect and promote the welfare of all children and young people under the age of 18 in England. This note focuses on the role of Education and though details of Rochdale's implementation are as yet unclear, the guidance offers us an insight into its priorities.

Stable Homes built on love (Sept. 2023) - The new guidance is central to the delivery of this strategy. In Feb 23 the Government set out its pledges for the future of Children's Social Care (CSC) along with a strategy for transforming the experiences and outcomes for children who need support from CSC. – it followed the Josh MacAlister Care Review in 2022 and the CSPR's for Arthur Labinjo-Hughes and Star Hobson.

Stable homes built on love is organised under 6 'pillars' of reform:

1. Family help provides the right support at the right time so that children can thrive with their families
2. A decisive multi-agency child protection system
3. Unlocking the potential of family networks
4. Putting love, relationships and a stable home at the heart of being a child in care
5. A valued, supported and highly skilled social worker for every child who needs one
6. A system that continuously learns and improves, and makes better use of evidence and data.

Alongside this a National consultation took place – responses came from all sections of the population, including large numbers of previously cared for children.

The consultation showed strong support for;

*• A focus on love and relationships • the emphasis on early help and prevention • A multi-agency approach to safeguarding, supporting and protecting children, young people and families, **including more involvement of education professionals** • The commitment to family networks and a family first culture in the strategy, including recognition and support for kinship care • The ambition of the care experience missions • Recognition of the value of social workers and proposals that strive to improve recruitment, including apprenticeships.*

This briefing outlines the main changes in the 2023 edition, including updates around:

- multi-agency expectations for all practitioners
- working with parents and families
- clarifying the roles and responsibilities of safeguarding partners
- the role of education and childcare providers
- multi-agency practice standards
- support for disabled children
- tackling harm that occurs outside the home.



Alongside the Working together statutory guidance, the Government published:

• an updated Working together statutory framework, which sets out the legislation relevant to safeguarding. Working together to safeguard children: statutory framework (publishing.service.gov.uk)
• the Children's social care national framework, which sets out expectations for senior leaders, practice supervisors and practitioners in local authorities. Children's social care: national framework - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
• guidance on Improving practice with children, young people and families, which provides advice for local areas on embedding the Working together guidance and the Children's social care national framework in practice. Improving practice with children, young people and families - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

"Raising Rochdale"

Questions? Get in touch, speak to the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead or speak to the Local Authorities Education Safeguarding Officer's Hayley Reynolds & Margaret Barbour.

Educationsafeguarding@Rochdale.gov.uk

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Multi-agency expectations for all practitioners

The guidance introduces a set of multi-agency expectations for all practitioners involved in safeguarding and child protection. These expectations aim to ensure that practitioners:

- share the same goals
- learn with and from each other
- have what they need to help families
- acknowledge and appreciate difference
- challenge each other.

They are structured across three levels:

- strategic leaders (such as chief executives)
- senior and middle managers (such as heads of services, team managers, head teachers)
- direct practice (such as frontline social workers, police constables, teachers).

Inc. New Multi-Agency Practice standards for ALL practitioners working with children who may have / have been suffering significant harm. See link over page.

Working with parents and carers

The updated guidance sets out four principles that professionals should follow when working with parents and carers:

- **effective partnership and the importance of building strong, positive, trusting and co-operative relationships**
- **respectful, non-blaming, clear and inclusive verbal and non-verbal communication that is adapted to the needs of parents and carers**
- **empowering parents and carers to participate in decision making by equipping them with information, keeping them updated and directing them to further resources**
- **involving parents and carers in the design of processes and services that affect them.**

Multi-agency safeguarding arrangements

The updated guidance outlines new roles and responsibilities relating to the three safeguarding partners (the local authority, the police and the health service). Education were not made a statutory partner in this guidance, but its value was acknowledged.

Schools, colleges and education providers

- **It is recommended that LSPs have a representative from the education sector present at strategic discussions.**
- **It is expected that all local education and childcare providers working with children up to the age of 18 will be included in local arrangements.**
- **LSPs should consider including voluntary, charity, social enterprise (VCSE) organisations, childcare settings, and sports clubs in their arrangements.**

Providing help, support and protection - Early Help

Considering family needs in the context of early help

- Consider how the needs of different family members impact each other. Eg. education, mental and physical health, financial stability, housing, substance use and crime. Specific needs eg. disabilities, those whose first language isn't English, fathers or male carers, and parents who identify as LGBTQ.
- Focus on improving family functioning and developing the family's capacity, establish positive routines & solve problems.

The role of education and childcare settings

• Safeguarding professionals should work closely with education and childcare settings to share information, identify and understand risks of harm, and ensure children and fami-

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children

Children's social care assessments

• consider parenting capacity of both resident or non-resident parents & carers, as well as other adults living in the household.

• consider the influence of the child's family network and any other adults living in the household, as well as the impact of the wider community and environment.

• A lead practitioner will be allocated by the local authority and their partners once a referral has been accepted.

• The lead practitioner role can be held by a range of people, including social workers. For child protection enquiries, the lead practitioner should always be a social worker.

• The lead practitioner will have the appropriate skills, knowledge and capacity to carry out assessments, undertake direct work with families and co-ordinate services.

Harm outside the home

• Consider the needs, experiences & vulnerabilities of individuals or groups who are experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, harm outside the home – including from criminal exploitation, sexual exploitation or serious violence.

• Work with relevant partner agencies to consider the influence of groups or individuals perpetrating the harm.

Supporting disabled children and their carers

• Assessments should focus on the specific needs of the child and family, be strengths-based and gather effective information to support the best outcome for the child and family.

• Local authorities should implement a Designated Social Care Officer (DCSO) role to improve links between the social care services and the special educational needs and disability (SEND) system.