North West
Multi Agency Safeguarding
Learning & Support Hub

Stronger Together: Embedding Education as a Strategic Safeguarding Partner

A strategic approach to integrating education into local safeguarding arrangements.

Introduction

The 2023 revision of *Working Together to Safeguard Children* outlines clear expectations for multi-agency collaboration at three distinct levels. These expectations are designed to help local partnerships define how practitioners across sectors should work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of young people.

Education establishments play a vital role in this landscape. As trusted environments where children spend a significant portion of their time, educational establishments are uniquely positioned to identify concerns early, provide support, and contribute to co-ordinated safeguarding responses.

This document explores practical ways in which education colleagues can engage more strategically with local safeguarding arrangements. It offers ideas and approaches to help fulfil the expectations set out in *Working Together 2023*, ensuring that the voice and expertise of education are fully integrated into multi-agency safeguarding efforts.

Guiding Principles for Multi-Agency Working in Practice

Collaboration: Built upon mutual respect and shared responsibility, practitioners from different sectors working together to identify risks early, share information appropriately, and co-ordinate support around the needs of the young person.

Each agency brings its unique expertise, and when these are aligned through clear roles, open communication, consistent processes, and a culture of trust, the result is a more responsive and protective system that promotes long-term wellbeing for young people.

Learning: Effective multi-agency learning in safeguarding involves professionals from different sectors reflecting together on real cases, sharing insights, and identifying what works well and what could be improved. It promotes a culture of continuous improvement, where evidence-based learning is used to strengthen practice, build trust, and ensure better outcomes for young people.

Adopting a meta perspective in multi-agency safeguarding is essential for seeing beyond individual cases and understanding how systems, policies, and practices interact across agencies. This broader view helps identify recurring themes, systemic gaps, and opportunities for improvement.

For example, a local authority might use data from multiple schools and social care teams to spot a rise in exploitation risks in a specific area, leading to targeted community interventions. By stepping back to see the whole system, professionals can work more effectively to protect young people.

Relationships: When relationships are well-established, agencies are more likely to collaborate effectively, challenge constructively, and remain focused on the best interests of the young person. These connections also help break down silos, reduce duplication, and ensure that support is consistent and responsive across services.

Inclusivity: Practitioners are able to distinguish between adversity caused by economic and social pressures or acute family stress, and situations where young people are at risk due to parental abuse or neglect—and respond to each with confidence and appropriate action.

Supportive Challenge: Constructive and respectful process where practitioners feel confident to question decisions, raise concerns, and offer alternative perspectives when they believe a young person's safety or wellbeing may be at risk. It is rooted in a shared commitment to the young person's best interests and is supported by a culture of trust, transparency, and mutual accountability.

Supportive challenge may include:

- **Timely and evidence-based questioning** of decisions or actions that may not align with safeguarding best practice.
- **Using established escalation procedures** when concerns are not resolved at the first point of contact.
- **Maintaining professionalism and respect**, even when views differ.
- **Documenting concerns and responses clearly**, ensuring accountability and learning.
- **Focusing on outcomes for the child**, not on blame or hierarchy.

Embedding Education: Roles, Engagement, & Impact

Strategic Representation

1. Include senior education leaders (e.g. headteachers, safeguarding leads) as core members of safeguarding partnership boards and committees.
2. Document education as a strategic partner and ensure that education leaders are involved in developing the partnership vision, setting partnership priorities, and reviewing impact measures.
3. Establish education subgroups within the partnership to feed into strategic planning and decision-making.

Structured Communication

4. Create regular community of practice events for education professionals to share insights, concerns, and priorities with safeguarding partners.
5. Use feedback loops to ensure education voices are heard, acknowledged, and acted upon in partnership decisions.
6. Share partnership updates with education colleagues.

Data & Evidence Sharing

7. Incorporate education data (e.g. attendance, exclusions, safeguarding referrals) into multi-agency intelligence and needs assessments.
8. Co-develop dashboards or reports that reflect education-specific safeguarding trends and concerns.

Collaborative Planning & Review

9. Involve education in the design and review of local safeguarding strategies, policies, and procedures.
10. Co-produce safeguarding audits and evaluations with education partners to ensure relevance and impact.

Capacity Building & Learning

11. Offer joint training and development opportunities that include education staff alongside other agencies.
12. Promote shared learning from case reviews that highlight the role and impact of education in safeguarding.

Cultural & Systemic Integration

13. Recognise education as an equal safeguarding partner, not just a referral source.
14. Celebrate and share good practice from educational establishments to influence wider system improvement.
