

Framework for Support and Safeguarding Nottinghamshire



This document fulfils the statutory requirement for a local thresholds document under Working Together 2023.



Nottinghamshire
Safeguarding
Children Partnership

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Introduction

This guidance offers a clear, child-centred framework for practitioners working with children and families in Nottinghamshire. It supports professionals to recognise when a child may need support, help or protection to achieve their full potential. It reflects recent changes to how our services are delivered, through the Families First Programme, and our shared commitment to working in a relational, strength-based way with children and families, in line with legislative safeguarding documents such as Working Together 2023.

The guidance aims to strengthen the quality of conversations when early worries arise and to support timely, well-matched support, helping professionals work together so that children and families receive the help that best fits their circumstances.

The guidance recognises that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. All professionals have a duty under section 11 of the Children Act 2004 to promote the welfare and safety of children, and to maintain up-to-date safeguarding knowledge through training, supervision and support, particularly where concerns about significant harm emerge.

As partnerships, improving how we understand and respond to race, racism and racial inequality is a shared priority across Nottinghamshire. We recognise that race, racism and racial bias can influence how children and families experience services, how professionals interpret vulnerability, and how decisions about support and protection are made.

We are committed to being actively curious about identity, culture, faith and lived experience, and to reflecting on how bias may shape professional judgement. This includes being alert to issues such as adultification, cultural assumptions, and barriers to engagement linked to language, faith, migration history or previous experiences of services. By naming and addressing these factors openly in everyday practice, we aim to provide fair, proportionate and culturally responsive support for all children and young people, and to strengthen trust in our services across all communities.

In Nottinghamshire, we recognise that children's circumstances and experiences change over time, and that every family's journey is unique. By drawing on a wide range of strengths, relationships and services, we can work alongside families to help children to be safe, supported and able to thrive. This guidance is not a checklist of worries. It is a tool to support shared, consistent and restorative response to safeguard and support, including working alongside children's social care where required.

Vision

Children at the heart, families first

Our ambition is for every child in Nottinghamshire to thrive within their family and community. We believe children are best supported when services work together and 'with' families. By thinking family and acting early, we will deliver inclusive, responsive and integrated support that empowers families, protects children and creates lasting changes.

Through safer, simpler and stronger services we will provide earlier help, stronger family support and improved protection from harm. We will support children to remain in the care of their family network wherever possible. Our workforce will be supported to have the skills to work with families confidently, using evidence-informed practice. We will listen and respond to the views and experiences of children and families about what helps them. This is a system built on trust, collaboration and compassion, making sure children remain at the heart of everything we do.



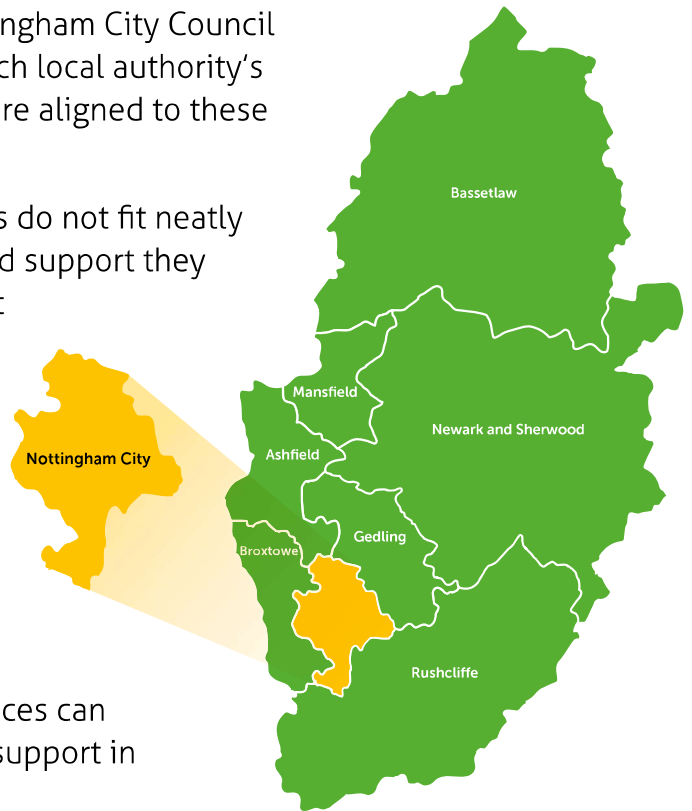
Section B:

How we work together for babies, children and families in Nottinghamshire

Nottinghamshire has two local authorities, Nottingham City Council and Nottinghamshire County Council. Within each local authority's areas there are districts. Family Help Networks are aligned to these geographical areas.

It is recognised that children's and families' lives do not fit neatly within defined boundaries, and that the help and support they may benefit from will change over time. Support should be shaped around the baby, child or young person's lived experience and what will make the most positive difference for them and their family.

Wherever possible, children and families will be supported through universal services and the relationships they already know and trust. When circumstances change or additional support would be helpful, other services can join alongside them to provide the right mix of support in response to what is happening at that time.



Police (Nottingham and Nottinghamshire)

Nottinghamshire Police work jointly across both Nottinghamshire local authority areas to prevent harm, identify risk at the earliest opportunity, and provide a consistent safeguarding response for children and families.



Health services (Nottingham and Nottinghamshire)

Health services operate within the Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Integrated Care System (ICS), promoting early intervention, safeguarding, and joined-up, child-centred support for families in Nottinghamshire and Nottingham City. Healthcare is mostly free-at-the-point-of-use for UK residents and almost always for children. Children and families can access universal services such as GP, 0 to 19 Healthy Family Team services (health visiting and school nursing), pharmacy and online support alongside urgent and emergency (pre-hospital) care, dental and eye care. Onward referral may be made to therapy services, hospital-based services delivered by NHS trusts across the county and city, and community paediatrics. Specialist provision includes children and young peoples' mental health services.

Support for children with additional or complex needs (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities - SEND) including concerns about neurodiversity is built around a graduated approach to providing support to children and their families. These are delivered in partnership with social care, education, and the private and voluntary sectors.

Key providers and partnerships include:

- **[Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust](#)**: Delivers mental health, intellectual disability, and community healthcare services across the county.
- **Acute Hospital Trusts:** [Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust](#) (QMC and City Hospital) and [Sherwood Forest Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust](#) (King's Mill, Newark, and Mansfield Community Hospitals) provide acute care, [Doncaster and Bassetlaw Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust](#) (Bassetlaw Hospital)
- **Primary Care & Urgent Care:** Local GP practices and urgent treatment centres, including services provided by [NEMS Community Benefit Services Limited](#) (out-of-hours).
- **Integrated Care System (ICS):** A partnership of NHS trusts, local authorities (Nottinghamshire County Council and Nottingham City Council), and voluntary sectors collaborating to improve health outcomes.

Families can be supported to find the right service including a GP or Dentist who is accepting children local to them at [Find services near you - NHS](#)

Education, learning and entitlements (Nottinghamshire)

Education plays a central role in children's lives and is often where early strengths, worries or changes are first noticed. Schools, colleges, early years settings and other education providers work alongside families and partner agencies to support children's learning, wellbeing and development.

You can search for free early education and childcare on the [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) website.

Early years and childcare

Children and families in Nottinghamshire may be entitled to funded early education and childcare, depending on their age and circumstances. This can include:

- funded childcare for 2-year-olds in some families
- universal funded early education for 3- and 4-year-olds
- additional funded hours for working families

Early years settings and Family Hubs can help families understand what they are entitled to and how to access local provision.

Information on Family Hubs in Nottinghamshire can be found on Your Notts Directory: www.yournottsdirectory.org.uk/children-and-families/family-hubs





Compulsory education

Children are required to be in education from the term after their 5th birthday until the end of the academic year in which they turn 16. Education can take place in a range of settings, including:

- schools
- academies
- alternative provision
- elective home education (where parents choose to educate their child at home)

Local Authorities have responsibilities to ensure that children of compulsory school age have access to suitable education and to work with families where attendance or engagement is a concern.

Post-16 education and training

Young people are expected to continue in education, training or employment with training until the age of 18. This may include:

- school sixth forms
- colleges
- apprenticeships
- supported learning pathways

Support at this stage often involves close working between education providers, families and other services to help young people prepare for adulthood.

Education and support up to age 25

Some young people are entitled to education and support up to the age of 25, particularly where they have:

- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)
- an Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan
- care experience or additional vulnerabilities

Local Authorities retain specific responsibilities for young people with EHC Plans up to 25, and education providers work with health, social care and other partners to support increasing independence and positive transitions into adulthood.

The role of education within this framework

Education settings are often trusted, familiar places for children and families. Within this framework, education professionals:

- contribute to understanding a child's lived experience
- support early conversations when worries arise
- work alongside families and other services to shape support
- play a key role in helping children feel safe, included and able to learn

Information about local education options, entitlements and support is available through Local Authority websites, Family Hubs and education providers.

Community, voluntary and faith-based support

Alongside education and statutory services, voluntary, community and faith-based organisations play a vital role in supporting children and families across Nottinghamshire. These services are often trusted, locally rooted and culturally responsive, offering practical help, emotional support, connection and a sense of belonging.

Community and voluntary organisations work alongside families, education settings and statutory partners at every stage of a child or family's journey, helping to build on strengths, reduce isolation and support positive change in ways that feel accessible and non-stigmatising.

Providing effective support to children and families



Universal support

Services that can offer support to all children and their families.

Children are supported through services that are available to all (also called universal services).

Most children can grow, learn and reach their full potential through the care and support of their family networks, their local community and the universal services they use every day. These services include schools, GPs, health visitors, early years settings, leisure activities, youth groups, local community groups and a wide range of voluntary and faith organisations.

Universal services work alongside parents and carers, recognising their strengths and offering support whenever it is asked for. By doing this, they help children stay safe, healthy and confident. They also support children to enjoy learning, develop socially and emotionally, and have the best possible start in life throughout childhood and into adulthood.

Across Nottinghamshire, through the support of their families and universal services, most children will have everything they require to thrive the majority of the time.

Outcome

Children and their families can easily access advice, guidance, and support within their local community or services they already use every day.

By building on their strengths, they feel confident, connected, and able to make timely progress in the areas of life that matter most to them.

Self-help and information / advice and guidance

Children and their families can access clear information and helpful resources. They can also find practical advice in formats that are easy to understand and accessible. This applies regardless of learning needs, language, culture, or background. These resources support them to find their own solutions.

This means many worries or challenges can be supported early, without the offer of onward referral to another service.

Services may also offer one-off advice or guidance when families ask for it, even if ongoing support or extra help isn't required. This supports families to feel informed and confident to recognise they can move forward using the strengths of the network and support they already have around them.

You can access information about what support is available from Nottinghamshire at:

www.yournottsdirectory.org.uk/children-and-families



Early Family Help

When extra support may make a positive difference

Many children need some extra help at different times in their lives. Families can often access this support themselves by contacting services directly, or by asking a universal service such as a school, health visitor, GP, family hub or early years setting to help them find the right option. Some services can also be accessed directly by young people. We all have a role in noticing early worries and offering support to children and families. Regardless of their organisation, role or professional background, whoever first notices a worry can act by beginning the Early Family Help process. By offering help early, practitioners can prevent issues from escalating and work with families to build on their strengths. When more than one service is involved, the support is usually led by the professional who knows the child best to help ensure that families receive timely, joined-up help from people they trust.

Sometimes one service can provide the additional help a family needs alongside their universal offer. In other situations, several agencies may be involved. Support is usually provided with the agreement of children and families and professionals should work openly and collaboratively to achieve this wherever possible. There are circumstances where information may need to be shared without agreement, in order to safeguard a child.

Locality teams or Family Hubs may contribute by offering advice and guidance, or by offering services such as parenting groups, youth work or community-based support. Early family help may also include supporting families caring for a child with additional needs or disabilities to access Direct Payments. Children with additional needs are usually best supported by the practitioners who already know them well. Family Hubs, early years settings, schools and other community partners can work together to put the right help in place. This joined-up approach enables professionals to understand the child's strengths, identify any worries and agree what support will make the biggest difference.

To support this, professionals should build on existing knowledge and conversations with the family to develop a shared understanding of the child's lived experience and what support may help. Where more than one service is involved, information should be brought together in a way that avoids families having to repeat their story.

Response and services

Services work together to offer support to the child or family with support coordinated ideally by the team or professional who they feel knows them best. This helps families receive timely, joined up support that fits the family's circumstances.

Support may include:

- parenting support
- school holiday activities
- short breaks for disabled children
- additional health support for family members
- extra help with learning, education, or finding employment
- speech and language therapy
- targeted youth work

All support is provided with parental agreement. Families should be involved in planning the support programme, reviewing progress and agreeing next steps.

When more than one service is involved, a single plan should be completed with the family. This plan brings everyone together, keeps communication clear, and ensures the family's goals are at the centre of all support.



Outcome

Children and their families have the additional support added into their established network to be able to move to achieve the positive difference they are looking for and improve children's outcomes.



Targeted family help

When more coordinated or specialist support may be needed

Targeted family help is provided when a family's needs become multiple or more complex and can no longer be met solely by community-led or universal services. At this stage, a multi-disciplinary Team Around the Family (TAF) approach is used, bringing together the right mix of professionals, including services within the local authority, to coordinate information sharing and provide joined-up support. This may also include situations where a family has specific support needs because they are caring for a child with complex needs or a disability. Support is usually offered with the agreement of children and families, alongside clear information about how services work together. There are circumstances where information may need to be shared without agreement in order to safeguard a child. Children who require family help, particularly those with complex needs, may need a targeted and coordinated response led by a Family Help Lead Practitioner. A clear plan should be developed about how help and support will be offered, and the expected impact on the lived experience of the child. This should be developed in partnership with the child, where age and developmental level allow, the family, and multi-agency colleagues.

Family help and child protection are part of a single, joined-up approach to help, support and safeguarding, shaped by an understanding of the child or young person's lived experience. As life changes, the people and services supporting a family may also change, with continuity of relationships and shared responsibility remaining central.

Where concerns are more serious, specialist and statutory services work alongside families and partner agencies to help keep children safe and support them to thrive. Family help is delivered through locality-based, multi-disciplinary teams working collaboratively with partners and communities. The aim is always to work with families in ways that build trust, reduce risk and support children to grow up safe and supported, with statutory intervention used where necessary and proportionate.



Outcome

Families are supported to build on their strengths, understand what is making life harder, and find solutions that feel right for them and their child.

Where concerns are more serious, there is a statutory responsibility for specialist services to be involved to help keep children safe. This includes situations where a child may be at risk of significant harm, where safety cannot be achieved without statutory involvement, or where specialist support is needed to prevent serious and lasting harm.

Family help - child in need

A child in need is defined under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 as a child who is unlikely to achieve or maintain a reasonable level of health or development, or whose health and development is likely to be significantly or further impaired without the provision of services, or a child who is disabled.

The request for a step across for support will include an assessment of the needs of individual children, giving due regard to a child's age and understanding when determining what, if any, services to provide. Where assessment identifies support is required at this level, this will be multi-disciplinary help and protection and professionals who know the family best will work alongside social workers to ensure a joined up and consistent approach to support.

Family help - immediate support (child protection)

When there are serious concerns about child abuse, specialist services have a legal duty to act. Under Section 47 of the Children Act 1989, if a local authority has reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm, it must carry out enquiries to decide what action is needed to safeguard and promote the child's welfare. These enquiries are supported by other organisations and agencies, where appropriate, and are used whenever there are concerns about any form of abuse or neglect.

Children who need protecting may be harmed within their own family or by people outside the home, including peers, adults in the community, or individuals they meet online. Significant harm can take many forms, such as physical, sexual or emotional abuse; neglect; domestic abuse (including controlling or coercive behaviour); exploitation by criminal gangs or organised crime groups; trafficking; online abuse; child sexual exploitation; and exposure to extremist influences that could lead to radicalisation.

Reaching the threshold of suffering, or being likely to suffer, significant harm triggers a child protection enquiry. At this point, specialist services step in to make sure children are safe and to support families in creating safer futures.

Child protection enquiries are undertaken by practitioners working within a multi-agency team. This includes social workers, health professionals, education staff and the police, all of whom have specialist knowledge and training in child protection. A Lead Child Protection Practitioner, who must be a qualified social worker, will lead multi-agency strategy discussions, oversee Section 47 enquiries, and chair child protection conferences if it is decided that one is required. This team works closely with locality family help teams to ensure support is joined-up and responsive.

Any practitioner who has concerns that a child may be at risk of significant harm should speak with the Family Help Lead Practitioner, if one is already involved, or contact the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) to discuss their concerns and agree the next steps.

Young carers

The Children's and Families Act 2014 defines a young carer as:

"a person under 18 who provides or intends to provide care for another person".

This Act extends the right to an assessment of needs for support to all young carers under the age of 18 regardless of who they care for, what type of care they provide or how often they provide it.

Each young carer's situation and circumstances will be different. These are some examples of what a young carer might do:

- Practical tasks such as cooking, housework or shopping
- Physical care such as helping someone out of bed
- Emotional support for someone who is distressed
- Personal care such as helping someone wash and dress
- Manage the family budget and collect prescriptions
- Help to give medicines or medical care
- Help someone to communicate
- Look after brothers and sisters



Practical help and advice for young carers:

[Young Carers Notts](http://www.youngcarersnotts.co.uk) (www.youngcarersnotts.co.uk) is a free and confidential service that supports young carers aged 5 to 17 who live in Nottinghamshire to take a break and get practical advice and information about caring. The aim of the service is to improve young carers' quality of life, including their physical and emotional health and wellbeing.

The service offers a one-stop-shop for young carers to join group sessions, access short breaks, socialise with other young carers, take part in fun activities, and access advice and support to help them in their care role.

They offer:

- Identification of need
- Access to a young carer ID cards
- Contingency planning and support
- Group based peer support
- Activities and social events
- Outreach and drop-in sessions
- Access to a free bus and tram travel card



To make a [referral](#) please use the online form. A referral can be made at any time.

Young Carers Notts is run in partnership between Tu Vite and Nottinghamshire Carers Association. The service is funded by Nottinghamshire County Council and Nottingham City Council in partnership with NHS Nottingham and Nottinghamshire.

**YOUNG
CARERS
NOTTS**



Kinship support and care

A kinship carer (or kinship family) is a relative or close family friend who steps in to raise a child when their parents are unable to care for them.

Relatives and family friends often provide essential support for children with some becoming their primary carers. In certain cases, children may live with caregivers who have legal responsibility, such as through adoption or special guardianship orders.

Kinship care can be arranged in different ways. Some kinship arrangements are informal family agreements and do not involve the local authority or the courts. There are also legal routes that give kinship carers specific responsibilities and rights. A Special Guardianship Order (SGO), for example, gives the caregiver parental responsibility for the child while keeping the birth parents' legal connection.

Other legal arrangements, such as Child Arrangements Orders or kinship foster care, also exist and offer different levels of responsibility, support and oversight.

In all forms of kinship care, the aim is to provide children with safe, secure and loving homes within their wider family network wherever possible. National guidance recognises that kinship care helps many children maintain important relationships and can prevent the need for them to enter formal care.

The kinship support service can directly support kinship families as well as offering professional guidance to other practitioners. To find out more about the offer, visit the website (www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/care/childrens-social-care/kinship-support-service) or contact the team via:

Phone: 0115 804 1407

Email: kinshipsupport@nottsccl.gov.uk

[Read our kinship support service leaflet](#)



Working with Family Networks to keep children safe and help families thrive

In Nottinghamshire, practitioners are encouraged to help families to explore and consider who is already in their support network who may be willing and able to provide additional support for a time. This aligns with our commitment to relational practice, family-led solutions, and keeping children within the care and strength of the people who know and love them best.

We know that support from a family's own network is more likely to be trusted, meaningful, and long-lasting, and that families make the most effective and sustainable plans when they feel listened to and have a real say in what happens to them and their families.

1. Identifying the Family Network (universal and Early Family Help)

At every stage of a child or family's journey, practitioners will talk with families about who is important to them including relatives, close friends, trusted neighbours, community members, or anyone else the family identifies.

- Help families think broadly not just who is already helping, but who might help if asked.
- Map the network together using genograms, ecomaps or other relational tools.
- This forms the foundation of all future support and helps ensure that families feel genuinely supported, not judged.

2. Practitioner supported family conversation or Family Network meeting (where families agree)

If the family is comfortable and willing, the Family Help Lead Practitioner can support the family to arrange a family conversation or informal network meeting. This includes helping to agree a time and place that works for the family, encouraging them to invite the people they feel will be most helpful, and supporting the conversation in a respectful, non-intrusive way.

This is appropriate when needs are early, straightforward, or where family relationships are positive and functioning well.

The aim is to help families talk together, understand the concerns, and begin to develop their own plan.

3. Independently arranged Family Group Conference (FGC)

Where the situation is more complex, for example where risks are greater, relationships within the family are strained or sensitive, or additional support is needed - and the family agrees, the Family Help Lead Practitioner can request an independently arranged Family Group Conference.

This ensures the process is neutral, skilled, and fully family-led.

A Family Group Conference (FGC) is a structured meeting led by an independent coordinator. It brings together family members and close friends to talk about concerns affecting a child and to agree a plan to support their safety and wellbeing.

The purpose of an FGC is to:

- empower families to take the lead in decision-making
- provide a safe space for complex or sensitive discussions
- develop a clear family-owned plan
- strengthen the network around the child

Families are the central decision-makers; professionals share information but do not create the plan.

A Family Group Conference gives families the chance to hear clearly what the concerns or issues are and understand what support might be needed. It enables them to work together to find solutions that fit their values and relationships and develop a plan for their child's future.

The aim is always to keep children safe, preserve family relationships, and build long-term support within the family's own network.

Who can refer?

Whilst a referral for a Family Group Conference (FGC) is made by the Family Help Lead Practitioner, all practitioners working with children or families have a shared responsibility to:

- Support families to identify their supportive network, including relatives, close friends, and significant people in the child's life.
- Encourage and assist families to have conversations with their network about what support may be available.
- Help families develop informal, family-led plans where appropriate, ensuring the family remains central to decision-making.

Working with children, young people and families to understand support and make decisions together

Children are best supported when the adults and services around them work together with their family. It is important that everyone listens carefully to what matters to them. Support should build on their strengths as well as recognise any worries or challenges. Most families want the best for their children and welcome support when it feels respectful, transparent and genuinely helpful.

This framework is built on the principle that support should be created with children, young people and their families, rather than being delivered to them. It is based on the belief that decisions are strongest when children, young people and families understand what is happening and why.

Working in partnership with families

When we believe that a child or family may benefit from additional support, our starting point is a conversation. This involves explaining what help may be available, listening to the family's views, and understanding what they feel would make a positive difference for them.

Rather than asking for "consent to a referral", practitioners should work with families so that they agree that a service can contact them to explore what support might be helpful. This approach supports trust and engagement and reduces families having to repeat their story. It helps services offer the right support at the right time, and improves outcomes for children.

Agreement does not mean families have to accept support they do not want, but it does mean they are involved in decisions and understand the options available.



Children and young people's voice and understanding

Children and young people should be involved in decisions about their lives in a way that is appropriate to their age, understanding, and circumstances. This includes explaining what is happening, who may be involved, and why support is being offered.

Some children and young people may be able to agree themselves to support being explored. Others may need information to be shared, and decisions made with the support of parents, carers or trusted adults. Where children and young people have additional needs, disabilities, communication differences or learning difficulties, practitioners should take extra care to ensure information is accessible and that their views are heard in ways that work for them.

Understanding barriers, culture and lived experience

Families' willingness or ability to engage with support can be influenced by many factors, including previous experiences of services, trauma, pressures on family finances, discrimination, cultural expectations, language barriers, disability, neurodivergence, mental health needs or immigration concerns.

Professionals should be curious rather than judgmental, and consider how culture, faith, identity, community context and lived experience shape how families experience services. Taking time to build trust, offering information in accessible formats, using interpreters, and involving trusted community figures or professionals already known to the family can all help reduce barriers to engagement.

Sharing information clearly and transparently

Being open and honest about information sharing helps build trust and supports better outcomes for children. Families and children should be supported to understand what information will be shared, who it will be shared with, and why.

Information should be shared on a need-to-know basis, proportionately, and with the aim of helping children and families receive the right support. Clear explanations help families feel respected and reduce anxiety or misunderstanding.

When we don't agree

There will be times when professionals and families do not agree about what support is needed or what action should be taken. When this happens, it is important to explore the reasons for disagreement respectfully, listen to concerns, and consider whether fears, past experiences or misunderstandings may be influencing views.

Disagreement should not prevent professionals from continuing to work with families, seeking advice, or sharing information appropriately. Keeping communication open and transparent is more likely to maintain relationships and improve engagement over time.

When information must be shared without agreement

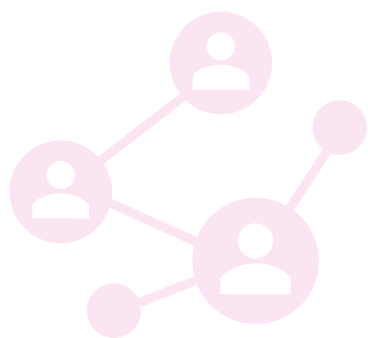
There are times when professionals have a duty to share information without agreement in order to safeguard a child. This includes situations where there are concerns about significant harm, neglect, abuse, or exploitation.

Safeguarding concerns may arise within the family or outside the home, including through peer relationships, online activity, or involvement in unsafe places or networks. For some young people, including care leavers, disabled young people and those experiencing exploitation, risks may continue beyond the age of 18 and into early adulthood.

When information is shared without agreement, professionals should be clear, honest, and compassionate. Wherever possible, children, young people, and families should be informed about what is being shared, why it is necessary, and what is likely to happen next. Being open supports trust and helps families remain engaged, even in difficult circumstances.

Further information

More detailed guidance is available in the Interagency Safeguarding Children Procedures of the NSCP / NCSCP under [Information Sharing](https://nottinghamshirescp.trixonline.co.uk/chapter/information-sharing) nottinghamshirescp.trixonline.co.uk/chapter/information-sharing



Practical language and script examples

The examples below are intended to support confident, respectful conversations with children and families. They are not scripts to be read word-for-word, but illustrate the tone and approach that supports agreement, trust and understanding.

1: Exploring support with families (agreement, not consent)

- I'd like to talk with you about some support that might be helpful. Would you be happy for that service to contact you to explore what they could offer?
- You don't have to decide anything today – this is about understanding options together.
- We can stop or change things if the support doesn't feel right for you.

2: Explaining information sharing

- I want to be clear about what information I'm sharing and why
- I only share information with people who need to know, so we can get the right support in place.
- If you have questions about who is involved, we can talk about that.

3: Involving children and young people

- I want to make sure you understand what's happening and hear what you think.
- You can tell me if something doesn't feel right or if you have questions.
- If it helps, we can talk again together, and you could bring along someone you trust to support you as well.

4: When there is disagreement

- It sounds like we see this differently, and that's okay – let's talk about what's worrying you.
- Sometimes people have had experiences with services which they have found difficult or less helpful, and that can naturally affect how this feels now.
- We can keep talking and think about what might help you feel more comfortable.

5: Safeguarding – sharing information without agreement

- I'm worried about safety, so I need to share some information to help keep people safe.
- This isn't about blaming anyone – it's about making sure the right help is involved.
- I want you to know what I'm sharing, who with, and what is likely to happen next.

6: Support beyond age 18

- Turning 18 doesn't mean support suddenly stops – it often means different services become involved.
- We'll help plan what happens next, so you're not left on your own.
- You'll be kept informed and involved as things change.



Understanding the child's lived experience

Considering what support may help, and when, for unborn babies and children (including young people with SEND up to age 25 years).

This framework moves away from using indicators as thresholds and instead uses descriptions of a child's lived experience to support understanding and decision-making. These descriptions help professionals consider what support may be helpful at different points in time, from universal help through to targeted or statutory responses, and what support might be explored with families. The descriptions are illustrative, not exhaustive, and experiences in one area of a child's life will often affect others. They should be considered together, alongside professional judgement and meaningful conversations with children, young people and families. Where concerns indicate a need for statutory intervention to safeguard a child, this framework is explicit about those responsibilities.



When universal support is helping the child to thrive

Health and wellbeing

- I have good physical and mental health, or if I have a health condition, developmental concerns and/or a disability, I am appropriately supported to achieve my full potential.
- My parents or carers understand my health needs and usually seek advice and support in a timely way when I am unwell or need help.
- I am brought to the health checks and services I need, including dental, hearing and optical checks, and my immunisations are up to date.
- There are no concerns about my growth, nutrition, hygiene or clothing impacting on my health.

Education and learning

- I have access to learning that supports my development, interests and future goals.
- I feel safe, welcomed and that I belong in my learning environment.
- The adults supporting my learning understand me and respond to my strengths and needs.
- I am able to participate, attend and engage in ways that work for me.
- My additional needs are recognised and supported so I can learn and develop alongside others.
- If I am educated at home it is by choice, and my family are aware of and able to access information, advice or support about home education if they wish. I have regular opportunities to learn, develop and socialise in ways that suit my age and interests.

Emotional and behavioural development

- I have relationships with adults who look after me in which I feel, understood, supported and comforted.
- I am learning to understand my feelings, behaviour and how to have safe and positive relationships, in ways that make sense for my age.

Identity

- I understand who I am and I like myself.
- I can recognise and celebrate my own skills or abilities.
- I know that I am loved and have people to spend time with and places where I feel comfortable.
- I can let people know what I need.

Family and social relationships

- I have a calm and loving relationship with my parent or carers.
- I have good relationships with my siblings and children or young people.

Self-care skills

- I am given all the help I need to look after myself and meet my own needs as would be expected for my age and development.

Parents and carers

Basic care, safety and protection

- My parents or carers understand my needs and are able to provide the care and things I need to stay healthy, safe and well.
- My parents or carers understand what might put me at risk, in ways that make sense for my age, and take appropriate steps to help keep me safe and happy.
- I am supported to be safe online and when I use technology.

Emotional warmth and stability

- My parents or carers show me love, warmth, affection, praise and encouragement.

Guidance, boundaries and stimulation

- My parents or carers put guidance and boundaries in place that support me to stay safe and be part of my community.
- My parents or carers help me learn during the time they spend with me.
- I am shown how to safely look after and spend time around animals or pets and there are no worries about this.

Safer sleep for babies

- My parents or carers have had an opportunity to talk about safer sleep and have developed a plan they can follow.
- I sleep in a safe space and position, or if we co-sleep this follows safer sleep guidance and fits our family's situation.
- Nothing about my health or home makes sleep more risky, and my parents or carers know when co-sleeping is more unsafe and how to manage these times.



Family and Environmental Factors

Family history and functioning

- I have good relationships with my family members, and they have good relationships with each other, including if my parents are separated.
- My family support each other when we need help.

Housing, employment and finance

- My home has what it needs to ensure I am safe and healthy.
- My home is clean and hygienic.
- My family are not living with financial hardship.

Family's social integration

- My family and I feel part of our community and have people we could go to for help or support.
- My family's beliefs, identity and culture are supported and respected within our community.

Community resources

- My family and I can access the services and community support we need, and barriers such as cost, transport, digital access, language or culture are recognised and addressed.



When extra support may make a positive difference

(Early Family Help / Level 2)

At this level, something in the child's lived experience may be becoming more difficult or less settled. Additional support, offered early and in partnership with the family, may help prevent difficulties from escalating and strengthen protective factors.

Health and wellbeing

- My family may need support to access routine health care, including appointments, immunisations or advice, so that small concerns do not become bigger ones.
- My family may benefit from help to navigate health services or to seek advice earlier when I am unwell.
- My diet, hygiene, sleep or clothing may sometimes affect my health or wellbeing, and with support this could improve.
- If I have a long-term condition, disability or developmental need, my family and I may benefit from additional help to ensure my health needs are consistently met.
- I may be starting to use coping strategies (such as substance use) that affect my health, safety or decision-making, and need help to understand risks and alternatives.

Education and learning

Practice point: changes in attendance, participation or engagement are signals that something in the child or young person's experience may need to be understood and supported. Practitioners should explore barriers with curiosity and work collaboratively to remove them.

- I may be finding it harder to engage with learning or feel connected in my education setting.
- Something may be making attendance or participation more difficult for me.
- I may benefit from adjustments, flexibility or better understanding to help me access learning.
- My strengths and support needs may not yet be fully recognised.
- My family may benefit from advice or reassurance to help me stay connected to learning.
- If I am electively home educated, there may be emerging questions about whether my education is consistently meeting my learning and social needs, or whether I am becoming more isolated.
- I may not have enough opportunities to play, socialise or develop positive peer relationships.

Emotional wellbeing, relationships and safety

- I may benefit from support to understand my feelings and develop safe ways to manage challenges.
- My behaviour may be communicating something about my experiences, relationships or unmet needs.
- My family may benefit from support to understand what is underlying my behaviour and how best to respond.
- Some of my difficulties may be attributed mainly to labels or diagnoses, when factors such as relationships, routines, trauma or stress may also need attention.
- I may be learning how to understand how my actions affect others and how to make safe, positive choices.
- I may need help to recognise emotions (my own and others') and to build respectful, healthy relationships.
- I may need support to understand prejudice, discrimination or racism — including when my behaviour may be causing harm — and to repair relationships safely and respectfully.
- I may be experiencing bullying, discrimination or racism, and need support to feel safe and valued.

Identity, belonging and inclusion

- I may be finding it difficult to understand who I am or to feel confident in myself.
- I may feel excluded, different or isolated in ways that affect my wellbeing.
- I may need support to explore identity, culture, faith or belonging in a way that feels safe and affirming.

Family, friendships and relationships

- I may be exploring romantic or sexual relationships and need help to understand consent, boundaries, healthy relationships and how to protect my physical and emotional wellbeing.
- I may have some support from family or friends, but my support network could be strengthened.
- I may be taking on caring responsibilities at home and need help to ensure this does not affect my education, sleep or wellbeing.
- If I am a young parent, or my parent is very young, we may benefit from additional guidance and practical support.
- If I am adopted or have experienced care, my family and I may benefit from extra understanding and support.
- My family may find it hard at times to think positively about our future, and may benefit from encouragement to build hopes and plans together.

Social presentation and self-care

- I may sometimes appear withdrawn or overly friendly in ways that suggest I need support with boundaries and safety.
- I may need support to develop age-appropriate self-care skills.
- My personal care may not always reflect my age or development, and this may affect how I feel about myself or how others respond to me.

Parents and carers

Basic care, safety and protection

- My parents or carers may need support, advice or practical help to provide the care and protection I need.
- There may be emerging risks in my home, community or online world that my family needs help to manage.
- Some risks to me may come from outside the home, and my parents or carers may need support to respond effectively.
- There may be early concerns about online safety or supervision that could be addressed with guidance.

Emotional warmth and stability

- My parents' mental health, stress or circumstances may sometimes make it harder to provide the consistent emotional warmth I need.
- My parents or carers may benefit from support to respond to me in ways that help me feel secure, valued and understood.

Guidance, boundaries and stimulation

- I may experience inconsistent boundaries that feel confusing.
- I may spend a lot of time without adult interaction or guidance.
- I may benefit from more opportunities for play, stimulation and shared experiences.
- My family may need support to help me make safe choices and to repair relationships when difficulties arise.
- There may be early concerns about my safety around pets or animals, and guidance may be helpful.

Safer sleep (babies)

- My family and professionals may be working together on a safer sleep plan, but pressures such as tiredness, housing or routines may make this difficult to sustain.
- With support, my family can strengthen safer sleep practices.
- There are supportive adults who can help ensure that every sleep is as safe as possible.

Family and environmental context

Family relationships and functioning

- There may be conflict between adults at home that affects how I feel.
- I may have experienced a significant loss and need support to understand and process this.
- I may be taking on responsibilities at home that feel too much for my age.
- My parents or carers may have health needs that affect day-to-day routines.
- My family may have some support from friends or relatives, but this network could be strengthened.

Housing, employment and financial stability

- Financial pressures may be affecting my wellbeing.
- My home environment may need improvements to keep me safe and comfortable.
- My family may benefit from support to access education, employment or financial advice.
- If my family are seeking asylum or are refugees, we may benefit from culturally responsive support.

Community and belonging

- My family may feel isolated or disconnected from our community.
- We may experience discrimination, prejudice or racism that affects our sense of safety and belonging.
- We may need help to strengthen connections within our community.

Access to services

- Services may be available, but practical or relational barriers (cost, transport, language, digital access, past experiences) may make them difficult to use.
- Professionals may need to take additional steps to build trust and ensure I am seen, heard and understood.



When more coordinated support may be needed

(Targeted / Coordinated Support / Level 3)

At this level, the child's circumstances are more complex or layered, and coordinated multi-agency support is likely to be needed. Difficulties may be persistent, interconnected or increasing in impact. A clear plan developed with the child, young person and family can help strengthen safety, stability and wellbeing.

Health and wellbeing

- Health appointments, treatment or medication may not be consistently maintained, and this is beginning to have a clear impact on my physical or emotional wellbeing.
- My family and I may need coordinated support to manage long-term conditions, disability or complex health needs safely.
- Help may often be sought only at crisis points, suggesting earlier support could be strengthened.
- I may be using substances in ways that affect my safety, vulnerability or decision-making, and this may be linked to coping, peer influence, coercion or exploitation.
- If I am under 16 and pregnant or parenting, coordinated support is needed to understand the context of my pregnancy and ensure both I and my baby are safe and well.

Education and learning

- I am experiencing ongoing barriers that significantly affect my access to learning or sense of belonging in education.
- My education setting may not yet be able to meet my developmental, emotional or additional needs without coordinated support.
- Changes in my life are having a sustained impact on attendance, engagement or achievement.
- If I am electively home educated, there may be increasing concerns about isolation, access to suitable education or visibility to services.

Emotional wellbeing, relationships and safety

- My emotional wellbeing difficulties are persistent and affecting my development, relationships or safety.
- I may be using coping strategies that place me at risk, including self-harm, unsafe relationships or harmful behaviours.

- My behaviour may be placing me or others at risk, and coordinated support is needed to understand context and reduce harm.
- I may be influenced, pressured or drawn into unsafe activities, including exploitation or criminal behaviour.
- I may be going missing or spending time in situations where my safety cannot be assured.

Identity, belonging and inclusion

- I may be experiencing discrimination, bullying or racism that is significantly affecting my wellbeing or safety.
- I may be expressing or being influenced by harmful beliefs, including racist or extremist views, and need support to understand impact, belonging and safety.
- I may feel increasingly isolated, excluded or disconnected from supportive relationships.

Family, friendships and relationships

- Family relationships may be strained, conflicted or unstable in ways that affect my emotional security.
- I may have caring responsibilities that are impacting my education, wellbeing or development.
- If I am adopted, care-experienced or living in kinship care, my family and I may need additional coordinated support.
- I may be in relationships where there are concerns about consent, coercion, exploitation or power imbalance.

Parents and carers

Care, safety and protection

- My parents or carers may be overwhelmed by their own circumstances and need coordinated support to keep me safe.
- Risks to me outside the home may not be reducing despite support, and a stronger multi-agency response is required.
- Online risks or peer influences may be increasing and need coordinated intervention.

Emotional stability and guidance

- Inconsistent boundaries, high stress or adult conflict may be affecting my sense of stability and safety.
- Adults may need structured support to respond consistently and protectively to my needs.

Family and environmental context

Family relationships and functioning

- There may be sustained conflict, domestic abuse or instability in my home that affects my safety or wellbeing.
- A family member's involvement in the criminal justice system may be affecting our stability, income, housing or relationships.
- Parental health, substance use or mental health difficulties are having a significant impact on day-to-day care.

Housing, employment and financial stability

- Housing instability, overcrowding or homelessness may be affecting my safety or development.
- Persistent financial hardship is impacting on my wellbeing and access to opportunities.

Community and access to services

- My family may face ongoing barriers to accessing support, including trust, language, culture or previous experiences.
- Despite involvement from services, coordinated planning is needed to ensure my safety and wellbeing.



Section I:

When statutory intervention is required to help keep the child safe

(Statutory Support / Level 4)

Practice note

Professionals do not need to be certain that significant harm has occurred in order to seek statutory support. The focus should be on the impact of concerns on the child's safety, wellbeing and development. Where there is reasonable cause to suspect significant harm, statutory involvement may be required to safeguard the child.

Health

Practice point

Focus on the impact of unmet health and physical care needs rather than isolated missed appointments. Escalation should be considered where patterns of care, decision-making or access to services place the child at risk of significant harm.

- There are serious concerns that missed, delayed or inconsistent health care is significantly affecting my physical or mental health, development or long-term outcomes.
- Where I have a long-term condition, disability or complex health needs, lack of timely or appropriate care places me at increased risk of harm.
- There are concerns that injuries or illnesses may be fabricated, induced or misrepresented, placing me at risk of significant harm.
- An unborn or newborn baby may be at significant risk due to lack of antenatal care, substance use, domestic abuse or previous safeguarding concerns.
- Despite support from services, the impact on my health, wellbeing or development remains significant and unsafe.



Education and learning

- I am not accessing education and this raises serious concerns about my safety, wellbeing or development.
- I am not visible to education or other professionals and my welfare cannot be assured.
- My access to education is restricted in ways that place me at risk of neglect, exploitation or harm.
- There are significant safeguarding concerns linked to a decision to home educate me that go beyond educational suitability.

Emotional and behavioural development

- My emotional or behavioural needs are not being met in a way that keeps me safe, and I am at risk of significant harm.
- There are serious concerns that responsibility for difficulties is being placed on me in ways that prevent adults from recognising risk or protecting me.
- There are serious concerns that I am being sexually or criminally exploited, groomed or controlled.
- I am under 13 and sexually active, raising significant safeguarding concerns.
- Despite support, I continue to experience significant distress, trauma or risk requiring statutory protection.

Identity

- I am experiencing serious discrimination, bullying or racism and this is significantly affecting my safety or wellbeing.
- I am socially isolated in ways that increase my vulnerability.
- I am expressing or being drawn into extremist or radical beliefs or behaviours that place me or others at risk.

Family and social relationships

- I am a child who is looked after by the local authority or require accommodation outside my family home.
- My family relationships have broken down in ways that significantly affect my safety or wellbeing.
- I have been a victim of abuse, including chronic neglect that is impairing my development.
- I am the main carer for a family member and this is significantly impacting my wellbeing.
- There are serious concerns I may be forced into marriage or harmful cultural practices.
- An adult assessed as posing a risk to children is living with or having unsupervised contact with me.

- There are serious concerns about harm to animals or use of animals as part of coercion, control or violence in the home.
- I may be living with someone who is not a close family member for 28 days or more, and this arrangement has not been formally assessed (private fostering).

Parents and carers – basic care, safety and protection

- I am not safe and there are serious concerns that my basic care or protection needs are not being met.
- The harm or risk I face may be severe, persistent or immediate and may meet the legal threshold of significant harm.
- Protective actions taken so far are not sufficient to reduce the risk to me.
- There are serious concerns that I am being abused, neglected, exploited or otherwise significantly harmed.

Responsibilities and when children's social care must act

This framework supports professionals to understand the lived experience of children and to work with families to explore what help and support may be most helpful at different points in time. Alongside this, professionals across all agencies have clear statutory responsibilities to safeguard children where there are concerns about their welfare.

Children's social care has specific duties under the Children Act 1989 to assess and intervene where children may need protection, care or statutory support. These duties apply regardless of whether support is offered on a voluntary basis and must be acted upon when required.

In deciding whether statutory intervention is necessary, children's social care considers, alongside information from partner agencies:

- What is likely to happen to a child's health or development without services being provided; and
- The likely effect that services will have on the child's health and development.



Children in need of statutory support

Some babies, children and young people may require statutory involvement from children's social care because their needs cannot be met through universal or targeted support alone.

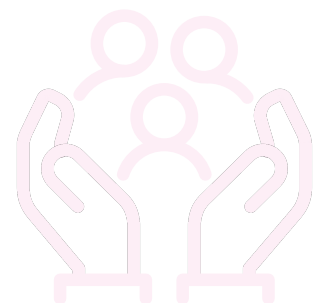
This includes situations where:

- Children are experiencing significant or complex needs that require statutory assessment or intervention.
- Parenting capacity is significantly compromised, and this is impacting on a child's safety or development.
- There is a risk of family breakdown or the need for accommodation outside the family home.
- Children have complex needs related to disability, long-term health conditions, adoption or care experience that require a statutory response.

Children in need of protection

Where there are concerns that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm, professionals have a duty to act to safeguard them. This includes concerns relating to abuse, neglect, exploitation, domestic abuse, contextual or extra-familial harm, or situations where adults pose a risk to children.

In these circumstances, information must be shared appropriately, and statutory processes may need to be initiated even where families or young people do not agree. Wherever possible, professionals should remain open and transparent with children, young people and families about concerns, actions being taken, and what is likely to happen next.



Children in need of care and care-experienced young people

Some children require accommodation or care by the local authority in order to safeguard their welfare. This includes children who cannot remain safely within their family network, unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, and those whose welfare can only be safeguarded through provision of care.

Care-experienced young people may continue to require support beyond the age of 18, and statutory responsibilities may extend into early adulthood in line with relevant legislation and local arrangements.

Safeguarding procedures

Detailed statutory criteria, decision-making processes and multi-agency responsibilities are set out in the Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Children Partnership Procedures, which all professionals should refer to when statutory thresholds are being considered or safeguarding concerns are identified.

nscp.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/policy-and-guidance/



For further information contact:

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Published June 2026

The web links and email addresses in this document
were all checked at the time of publishing.



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