

Consultation

Working together consultation response

18 September 2026

Section 1: Voice of children and their families

1 Do you agree that these proposals will strengthen the voice of children and families, including those who are under-represented or marginalised, in multi-agency safeguarding arrangements?

Agree

2 Is there anything else you would like to comment on in relation to child and family voice and how this is included or represented in the statutory framework for help, support and protection (Working Together and the National Framework)?

Please enter your answer in the box below:

2.1 It is important that children and young people are supported to engage ethically and safely with these expectations. MASA partners may need guidance and support in how to do this in a way that is sensitive, safe and supportive and that the rationale is clearly understood by all. Feedback about the impact of participation is important for children and families. This resource from LGA and Coram Voice will be useful for agencies: *Listening and engaging care experienced individuals, a good practice guide* ([LGA, 2024](#))

2.2 Families who have had more difficult experiences with children's social care may experience barriers to them giving feedback that could inform service development. It is therefore important that feedback is sought from a variety of sources including those who have had more positive outcomes and experiences and those with less positive outcomes and experiences to improve services.

Section 2: Multi-agency safeguarding arrangements (MASA)

3 Do you agree that the proposed changes will improve independent scrutiny across partnerships, including how effectively it supports shared learning and continuous improvement in multi-agency child protection practice, while still allowing sufficient local flexibility?



Neither agree nor disagree

4 Do you agree that a single statutory annual return would improve accountability and understanding of the impact and effectiveness of local safeguarding partner arrangements?

Neither agree nor disagree

5 Do you agree that the proposed changes would improve the consistency and effectiveness of safeguarding responses to concerns about adults who work with children in any capacity?

Neither agree nor disagree

6 Do you agree that this approach and proportionate LADO involvement would improve consistency and outcomes for children?

Neither agree nor disagree

7 Is there anything else you would like to comment on in relation to MASAs or the role of the LADO?

Please enter your answer in the box below:

7.1 We support greater consistency and clarity in LADO practice, including clearer thresholds, responsibilities and interfaces with employers and safeguarding processes.

7.2 Guidance should recognise risk and not solely rely on a demonstrable harms-led threshold. For example a volunteer who works with children may show behaviour in a setting that may not specifically cause harm to a child but could suggest that they may be unsuitable to work with children. Guidance for employers and organisations about this new threshold would be helpful.

7.3 Further clarification is needed regarding how LADO reforms interact with fostering services and foster carers. With the development of updated fostering standards and new allegations processes for foster carers it is important that those reforms and this guidance is aligned

Section 3: Help and Support

8 Do you agree that Targeted Early Help should be removed and all Family Help support and services should be provided under section 17?

Agree

9 Please outline the reason for your answer to question 8.

Please enter your answer in the box below:



9.1 We support the removal of Targeted Early Help and the strengthening of Family Help arrangements within a clearer statutory framework. This has the potential to improve consistency, reduce artificial thresholds between services, and provide a more coherent response to families.

9.2 There are varying levels of support at targeted early help and we are aware that agencies outside of children's social care can lack funding/infrastructure to deliver targeted early help outside of statutory support meaning that health or education partners for example may not have sufficient resources to contribute to this as effectively as they would want. Examples include schools not being satisfied that targeted early help was sufficient to address risks in a family and being unwilling to be lead partner in these arrangements. Having all Family Help support under section 17 would address this.

10 Do you agree these changes will strengthen the use of Family Networks in keeping children safely at home?

Neither agree nor disagree

11 To what extent do you agree with the following statement: To make family network engagement more central to children's services, guidance should state that existing processes including family help plans, child protection plans and child protection conferences should become more aligned to the principles of Family Group Decision Making, where safe and appropriate.

Agree

12 Do you agree that we should explore requiring local authorities to provide a support plan for children returning home on a supervision order?

Strongly agree

13 Is there anything else you would like to tell us about Family Help, Family Networks, Family Group Decision Making, Family Network Support Plans or reunification?

Please enter your answer in the box below:

13.1 FGDM: FGDM should remain a distinct and meaningful process. It can and should be offered during earlier planning processes, where safe, helpful and appropriate. Earlier planning processes should align with the principles of FGDM as well as encouraging FGDM itself. Guidance needs to be clear that existing planning processes that may align with these principles should not be treated as substitutes for FGDM that is legally required to be offered.



13.2 Planning processes offered earlier may have been less robust or urgent eg family meeting or alternative. There will be a risk that family may reject offer of new FGDM if a 'quasi' FGDM has already occurred. Guidance needs to clarify what constitutes FGDM, require communication about this with family and embed the principles of review FGDM meetings where appropriate. FGDM guidance should be accessible to all and available more widely than on Knowledge Hub.

13.3 Reunification: Support plans should be required for all children returning home from care.

Section 4: Protection

14 Should the following MACPT functions be prescribed in regulations?

14.1 MACPT Q1 - provide advice and consultation for practitioners who need MACPT expertise:

14.2 MACPT Q1 - determine whether the significant harm threshold has been met:

14.3 MACPT Q1 - convene and chair strategy meetings:

14.4 MACPT Q1 - lead or oversee multi-agency investigations (as required):

14.5 MACPT Q1 - convene and chair child protection conferences:

14.6 MACPT Q1 - oversee the development and delivery of child protection plans, and keep these plans under review:

14.7 MACPT Q1 - decide whether to move into pre-proceedings for care and supervision orders and the Public Law Outline (PLO) process: MACPT Q1 - provide relevant evidence for Emergency Protection Orders, Child Assessment Orders, care and supervision orders: MACPT Q1 - maintain knowledge of all children who are the subject of section 47 enquiries or on a child protection plan:

14.8 MACPT Q1 - contribute to reporting requirements aligned with statutory safeguarding partner duties to prepare and publish reports on local safeguarding arrangements:

15 Do you agree that statutory guidance should set out that MACPTs should have an agreed local multi-agency practice framework or approach aligned to the National Framework?

Neither agree nor disagree

16 Do you agree that statutory guidance should include an expectation that:

16.1 MACPT Q3 - LCPPs chair strategy meetings:



Neither agree nor disagree

16.2 MACPT Q3 - MACPT members ensure appropriate partner agency representation in strategy meetings:

Strongly agree

16.3 MACPT Q3 - MACPTs record whether the threshold decision has been met, alongside the reasons for the decision:

Strongly agree

17 Do you agree that regulations should prescribe that, within five days of the strategy discussion at which section 47 enquiries were initiated, the MACPT:

17.1 MACPT Q4 - reviews the progress of the section 47 enquiry:

Neither agree nor disagree

17.2 MACPT Q4 - sets a timeframe for the initial child protection conference, where an extension to the 15-day timeframe is needed:

Neither agree nor disagree

17.3 MACPT Q4 - records the decision and reasons for that timeframe:

Neither agree nor disagree

17.4 MACPT Q4 - agrees and documents a clear interim safety plan for the child:

Agree

18 Do you agree that statutory guidance should set out that initial child protection conferences should take place as close to the 15 day-timeframe as possible, unless there are exceptional circumstances agreed and recorded by the MACPT?

Neither agree nor disagree

19 Do you agree with introducing statutory guidance that Lead Child Protection Practitioners embedded in the MACPT should chair child protection conferences?

Neither agree nor disagree

20 Do you agree that regulations should prescribe that MACPTs:

20.1 MACPT Q7 - record decisions to discharge a child protection plan:



Strongly agree

20.2 MACPT Q7 - identify ongoing support after discharge, including where proceedings begin:

Neither agree nor disagree

20.3 MACPT Q7 - record input sought and obtained from all practitioners involved with the child:

Agree

20.4 MACPT Q7 - notify all relevant agencies of the decision:

Strongly agree

20.5 MACPT Q7 - notify parents and carers who were invited to the initial child protection conference of the decision:

Neither agree nor disagree

20.6 MACPT Q7 - inform decisions about and support transitions into pre-proceedings and the Public Law Outline, care proceedings, reunification and wider Family Help, early help or universal services?:

Strongly agree

21 Do you agree that statutory guidance should continue to support local flexibility in assigning pre-proceedings and court work?

Neither agree nor disagree

22 Do you agree that regulations should state that nominated MACPT members must, as a minimum:

22.1 MACPT Q9 - have knowledge and understanding of the statutory child protection framework:

22.2 MACPT Q9 - have an applied understanding of what constitutes actual or likely significant harm in all contexts (including inside and outside the home, and online) and across all age ranges (from unborn babies to teenagers):

22.3 MACPT Q9 - contribute effectively to assessment of needs, understanding the indicators and drivers of abuse, neglect and exploitation: MACPT Q9 - build an accurate and comprehensive understanding of the child's daily life to establish the likelihood of significant harm:



22.4 MACPT Q9 - act inclusively and foster anti-discriminatory environments in which it is safe to challenge and respond to the needs and experiences of children and families of different ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds:

22.5 MACPT Q9 - possess the ability to assess information for timely, effective and reliable multi-agency decision-making:

22.6 MACPT Q9 - respect and constructively challenge multi-agency perspectives to reach the best intervention and outcome for the child: MACPT Q9 - ensure interventions are prompt, evidence-based and tailored to the child:

22.7 MACPT Q9 - listen and take into consideration what children tell them (verbally or non-verbally) to help them and their family:

23 Please provide any further views on how regulations and statutory guidance should be aligned with existing national competency and skill frameworks, to support effective child protection practice.

Please enter your answer in the box below :

24 Do you agree that the eight relevant agencies that we have listed should be specified in regulations as in scope to enter into co-operation memorandums with the MACPT? (select all that apply)

25 Is there anything else you would like to comment on in relation to multi-agency child protection teams?

Please enter your answer in the box below :

26 Do you agree that statutory guidance should set out the elements below, to drive consistent and effective protective action for children suffering or likely to suffer significant extra-familial harm? (list with tick option for yes, no, don't know against each statement)

26.1 EFH Q1 - Situating parents/carers as partners alongside practitioners, where safe to do so:

26.2 EFH Q1 - Supporting parents, both those who do and do not have wider vulnerabilities requiring a children's social care response, to ensure they can continue to support their child(ren):

26.3 EFH Q1 - Working with the child so they can engage and participate in the process, ensuring the outcomes meet their needs (including previously unidentified or unmet needs) and make them feel and be safer:



26.4 EFH Q1 - Consistent application of the existing Section 47 thresholds for likely or actual significant harm to extra-familial harms: EFH Q1 - A focus on the contextual drivers of harm in all outcomes:

26.5 EFH Q1 - The role of MACPTs in co-ordinating partners who can create safety, or risk, in extra-familial contexts:

26.6 EFH Q1 - Clarity on the appropriate escalation process when the primary harm is extra-familial and action is needed from agencies and services rather than families, meaning e.g. care proceedings are an ineffective escalation:

26.7 EFH Q1 - A requirement for clear and accountable actions for professionals responsible for places where children are harmed (for example, community areas, businesses, public spaces, online):

26.8 EFH Q1 - Consistent participation in disruption activity:

27 Do you agree that statutory guidance should set out the following expectations:

27.1 LAC Q1 - consistent use of strategy discussions, section 47 enquiries and child protection conferences for looked after children:

Strongly agree

27.2 LAC Q1 - multi-agency input into child protection responses and care planning through the multi-agency child protection team and the LCPP role:

Strongly agree

27.3 LAC Q1 - clarity of roles, responsibility and lines of accountability of different practitioners in the team around the child:

Strongly agree

27.4 LAC Q1 - alignment of care planning and child protection processes including reviews and integrated plans:

Strongly agree

28 Do you agree that the current statutory framework for help, support and protection is clear enough about how to effectively safeguard children in kinship care?



Strongly disagree

29 If you do not agree, how would you like to see the statutory framework strengthened? (e.g., greater recognition that children living in kinship care may be impacted by complex family dynamics, more support for kinship carers to manage safeguarding responsibilities, training to improve services' understanding of the context of kinship arrangements, support for managing contact, etc.)

Please enter your answer in the box below :

29.1 Safeguarding partners should designate a lead responsible for raising awareness on kinship care. Kinship carers may need support to help children maintain relationships with important family members, including some who may pose risks. Without appropriate support and supervision, children may be exposed to harm in unsafe contact arrangements or unplanned time with parents. Many children in kinship care experience trauma and loss, which can contribute to child-to-parent violence, risk-taking behaviour, & vulnerability to extra-familial harm. Guidance should make explicit the link between insufficient support and safeguarding risks, set expectations for support planning & require accessible routes for carers to seek help without automatically triggering formal safeguarding processes. Where safeguarding concerns arise, guidance should require review of family's support needs to prevent unnecessary escalation to formal safeguarding responses or as a central outcome of formal procedures.

30 Do you think that DfE should update:

30.1 EFH Q2 - the definition of children sexual exploitation: EFH Q2 - the accompanying guidance:

31 Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. Which of the following are core aspects of child sexual exploitation:

31.1 EFH Q3 - it occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity:

31.2 EFH Q3 - it could be in exchange for something the victim needs or wants:

31.3 EFH Q3 - it could be for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator:

31.4 EFH Q3 - apparent consent is irrelevant, the victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual: EFH Q3 - child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology:



32 Do you agree these other features should also be included?

32.1 EFH Q4 - child sexual exploitation can occur where a child or young person under 18 is controlled, coerced, manipulated or deceived through the use of, or threat of, violence to engage in sexual activity. This violence and intimidation may be directed at any person and it only matters if the victim perceives this to be real:

32.2 EFH Q4 - child sexual exploitation can occur for sexual gratification:

32.3 Other (please enter your answer in the box below):

33 Do you agree that Working Together and the National Framework currently reflect good practice in responding to potential extreme violence by children?

Not Answered

34 In which areas could Working Together and the National Framework better reflect best practice in responding to extreme violence by children? (select all that apply)

Other (please enter your answer in the box below):

35 What expectations should there be across Working Together and the National Framework for how local authorities work with their multi-agency partners to respond to extreme violence and risks posed by children to others?

Please enter your answer in the box below:

36 Is there anything else you want to tell us about responding to extra familial harm, protecting looked after children and those in kinship care, or the children's social care response to extreme violence?

Please enter your answer in the box below:

36.1 Ongoing family relationships are important to children living in kinship care but these relationships need to be supported and safe. Children in kinship care might be exposed to ongoing family conflict either between their parents or between kinship carers and other family members. An increased multi-agency awareness of the complexity of kinship care should enable proportionate and appropriate support to be provided to those kinship families who need it. Children living in kinship care are likely to have similar needs to all children who have experienced loss, trauma and abuse and therefore should receive the same level of support as all vulnerable children, and support provided through a lens that understands the complexity of kinship care.



Section 5: Improving outcomes

37 To what extent do you agree that the expectations in the National Framework for children in care and care leavers supports children to have enduring relationships?

Not Answered

38 What benefits or difficulties can you see in separating Outcome 4 of the Children's Social Care National Framework into two distinct outcomes: one focusing on looked after children and one focusing on care leavers?

Please enter your answer in the box below:

39 How are you embedding the National Framework locally within your organisation? through briefings, updating learning and development products to reflect the National Framework Other (please enter your answer in the box below):

40 What additional support would you find most useful to consistently and effectively embed the National Framework into day-to-day practice? (Please select up to 3 options)

40.1 webinars tailored for multi-agency partners

40.2 Other (please enter your answer in the box below):

only able to check one option would include also:

40.3 + briefings

40.4 + regional peer engagement opportunities

40.5 Equalities

41 Do you have any overall comments about the potential impact, whether positive or negative, of our proposed changes on those who share protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010? Where you identify any negative impacts, we would also welcome suggestions of how you think these might be mitigated

Please enter your answer in the box below: