

Working Together to Safeguard Children in 2026

The updated 2026 guidance shifts Early Years from a supporting role to a **central safeguarding partner**. Settings are now expected to be involved earlier - including pre-birth - and collaborate more deeply across agencies to improve child outcomes.



Core Changes for Practitioners:

- **Expanded Scope:** Safeguarding explicitly applies from pre-birth through to babies and very young children. This requires stronger links with midwives and health visitors to support unborn children.
- **Child-Centred Evidence:** Practitioners must prioritise direct observations and interpret non-verbal cues in babies rather than relying solely on parent accounts.
- **Anti-Discriminatory Practice:** Settings must actively address inequality and bias, ensuring support is adapted for diverse families and stereotypes are challenged in decision-making.
- **Hidden Harms & Contextual Safety:** There is a heightened focus on identifying indirect indicators of domestic abuse, coercive control, and online harm, alongside risks located outside the home.

Read the full statutory guidance:



SCAN ME!

<https://bit.ly/Safeguarding-Together>

Systems and Collaboration:



The Family Help Model:

Fragmented support has been replaced by a single pathway focused on earlier intervention and stable practitioner relationships. Nurseries are now key to both identification and ongoing multi-agency planning.



Proactive Information Sharing:

Data protection must not be a barrier to safety. Practitioners are expected to share concerns early and proactively without waiting for consent if a child is at risk.



Professional Accountability:

DSLs and managers must actively engage in assessments, attend strategy discussions, and be prepared to professionally challenge other agencies when necessary.

The Bottom Line for Settings:

Early Years providers are now formally identified as "relevant agencies," meaning they are key safeguarding partners required to actively engage in multi-agency arrangements, share information proactively, and contribute to assessments. Consequently, settings must now provide rigorous evidence of their impact through data analysis, annual safeguarding reports, and participation in audits to demonstrate the effectiveness of their interventions.