

Glossary of Key Terms

Absolute right: A right under the Human Rights Act 1998 that is not a qualified right, in that an absolute right should not be breached under any circumstances. For example, under Article 3 of the Human Rights Act 1998, everyone has the right to not to be tortured, and this is an absolute right. Where an absolute right clashes with a qualified right, the absolute right is upheld. For instance, a child has an absolute right to protection from significant harm, and therefore the right under Article 8 of the Human Rights Act 1998 of a parent to privacy in a family home (a qualified right) can be breached (for example by the police and a social worker entering the home) to protect a child. See also **qualified right**.

Advocacy: a process in which one person aims to support and uphold the rights of another person, or ensure the voice of another person is heard.

Appropriate adult: an adult who is present during the interview between the police and a child or young person who has been arrested on suspicion of a crime. This can be a parent or carer, a social worker or similar. The role of the appropriate adult is to advise the young person, ensure the interview is carried out fairly and properly, liaise between the young person and the police, and support the welfare of the young person. A young person must not be interviewed, or be asked to sign any statement in the absence of an appropriate adult. See also **criminal justice system, youth offending team**.

Care plan: the multi-agency plan for a looked-after child which provides details of the child's living arrangements, how the child's health, educational and leisure needs are being met, any equipment, clothing or funding the child needs, and any foreseen changes to the child's circumstances. It is the social worker's responsibility to ensure a care plan is completed. See also **looked-after child, personal education plan (PEP)**.

Care proceedings: the process whereby, often following Section 47 enquiries, a social worker attends the family court to ask for a legal order in respect of a child in need of protection, usually where the level of harm is considered to be so severe that it is not safe to leave the child at home. See also **child in need of protection, Section 47 enquiries, significant harm**.

Child in need of protection: a child who, under Section 47 of the Children Act 1989, is suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm and who therefore has the right to be protected from that serious harm. These children have a greater level of need than a 'child requiring early help' and a 'child in need of support'. They may need to be removed from the care of their parents or main carer in order to keep them safe, but may also remain living at home. See also **care**

proceedings, child in need of support, child protection plan, child protection review conference, child requiring early help, core group, initial child protection conference, looked-after child, Section 47 enquiries, significant harm, strategy discussion.

Child in need of support: a child who, under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989, is unlikely to achieve or maintain a reasonable standard of health or development, or whose health or development is likely to be significantly impaired, unless they receive some support. These children have a greater level of need than a 'child requiring early help' but not as great a level of need compared with a 'child in need of protection' or a 'looked-after child'. All disabled children are automatically classed as being in need of support. They live at home with their parents or main carers. See also **child in need of protection, child requiring early help, child with special educational needs and disability (SEND), looked-after child.**

Child protection plan: the formal multi-agency plan that follows a decision at an initial child protection conference that a child is at continuing risk of significant harm. The plan is designed to keep the child safe and provide support services to address the areas of concern. See also **child in need of protection, child protection review conference, core group, initial child protection conference, Section 47 enquiries, significant harm, strategy discussion.**

Child protection review conference: the multi-agency meeting that reviews progress of the child protection plan. Each child protection review conference should consider whether or not the child needs to remain subject of a child protection plan and, if so, whether or not any changes are needed to the plan in order to keep the child safe and address areas of concern. The members of the core group usually attend this meeting. The first child protection review conference should be held within three months of the initial child protection conference, and thereafter every six months. See also **child in need of protection, child protection plan, core group, initial child protection conference, Section 47 enquiries, significant harm, strategy discussion.**

Child requiring early help: a child with a relatively low level of need who may be living in challenging circumstances which may hinder their health or development in some way. They live at home with their main parents or carers. See also **child in need of support, child in need of protection, early help, looked-after child, Team Around the Child (TAC).**

Child with special educational needs and disability (SEND): a child who has either a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age, or who has a disability or chronic health condition which prevents or hinders them from making use of the facilities generally provided for others of the same age. These children are automatically classed as children in need of support, although support for children with SEND is organized differently compared to other children in need of support. See also **child in need of support, Education Health and Care (EHC) plan, special educational needs (SEN) Support.**

Common assessment framework (CAF): the assessment that is offered to children and families by staff in universal services, where a child in the family is deemed to be a child requiring early help. See also **child requiring early help, targeted services, universal services.**

Community of practice: the term given to a group of people with a shared interest, who set about deepening their knowledge by communicating with one another. This can lead to effective working at an individual and organizational level, and to the team building up a long-term sense of shared identity and values.

Confidentiality: the protection of sensitive information about a person. Information is confidential where it is of a sensitive nature (for example, related to private family matters, health issues or sexual orientation) and not already lawfully in the public domain or available from a public source, or has been shared in circumstances where the person giving the information understood that it would not normally be shared with others. See also **consent, information sharing, personal information, proportionality**.

Consent: permission or agreement given by one person to another person to, for example, share information about them or to administer treatment. Consent must be informed, which means that the person giving the consent should understand all aspects of what they are agreeing to. Consent can be explicit (verbally or in writing) or implicit (signalled by the person's behaviour). Parents and children who are deemed to be capable are able to give consent. See also **confidentiality, information sharing, personal information, proportionality**.

Core group: the relatively small group of professionals from various agencies who, following a child being made subject of a child protection plan, meet to formulate the detailed plan and decide who will take responsibility for the various elements of it. Core group membership always includes the social worker and their line manager, the parents and professionals with direct involvement with the family such as school or early years staff, and the health visitor or school nurse. See also **child in need of protection, child protection plan, child protection review conference, initial child protection conference, Section 47 enquiries, significant harm, strategy discussion**.

Corporate parenting: the collective responsibility of all agencies involved, directly or indirectly, with a looked-after child in order to achieve good parenting. The idea is that everyone concerned considers looked-after children as their own and does whatever they can to help and support them. See also **looked-after child**.

Criminal justice system: The set of services and organizations and the related systems and processes, supported by government, to tackle crime and impose penalties on those who break the law. This includes the police, courts, prisons, probation service and youth offending teams. See also **appropriate adult, youth offending team**.

Early help (or early intervention): Intervention by staff in universal services in response to signs that a child may require support to help them overcome a problem. A common assessment should be offered to the family. The intention of early help is to 'nip problems in the bud' by providing timely and relevant local services to prevent problems escalating. Early help does not only mean help provided to children in the early years; although it may include this group, early help might be provided to a child of any age. See also **common assessment framework (CAF), universal services**.

Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan: A multi-agency plan put in place for children with complex needs such as special educational needs, a disability or chronic health condition. This plan is coordinated and overseen by the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) within the child's school. See also **child with special educational needs and disability (SEND)**, **special educational needs (SEN) support**.

Family Group Conference: a particular approach to child support planning, usually used for a child requiring early help or a child in need of support, which emphasizes and recognizes the strengths within families to provide solutions. The process is led by family members, who plan and make decisions for the child, with the advice and support of professionals. The idea is that this process enables families to take control of the plan. See also **child in need of support**, **child requiring early help**, **family support plan**.

Family Support Plan: the multi-agency plan that emerges after an assessment of the child and family's needs has taken place. It is usually used in relation to a child in need of support (where a statutory assessment has taken place) but might be used in relation to a child requiring early help (where a common assessment framework – CAF – has taken place). For a child in need of support, it may be referred to as a child-in-need plan. See also **child in need of support**, **child requiring early help**, **common assessment framework (CAF)**, **statutory assessment**.

Guidance (or national guidance): government guidance that accompanies legislation, usually produced to provide more detail on how the law should be carried out in practice. Some guidance is statutory, meaning that the relevant services and authorities must follow the guidance. For example, the Children Act 1989 is the legislation, but in relation to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, the relevant statutory guidance is called *Working Together to Safeguard Children*. See also **legislation**, **state**, **statutory**.

Individualized barriers: barriers to multi-agency work which are located within individuals and are therefore susceptible to being changed. See also **structural barriers**.

Information sharing: the exchange of information or data between two parties. See also **confidentiality**, **consent**, **personal information**, **proportionality**.

Initial child protection conference: the multi-agency meeting that takes place following Section 47 enquiries, where a child is considered to be in need of protection, but a decision is made that it is safe to leave the child at home. The only decision the initial child protection conference can make – based on whether or not the child is considered to be at continuing risk of significant harm – is whether or not the child should be made subject of a formal multi-agency child protection plan. See also **child in need of protection**, **child protection plan**, **child protection review conference**, **core group**, **Section 47 enquiries**, **significant harm**, **strategy discussion**.

Inter-agency work: can be used interchangeably with multi-agency work, to mean at least two workers from different agencies (or services) who carry out essentially different roles and who are engaged in joint work. See also **inter-professional work**, **multi-agency work**, **multidisciplinary work**.

Inter-professional or interdisciplinary work: at least two workers from different professions or job roles, who are engaged in joint work. They may or may not be employed by the same agency. For example, a Health Visitor and a General Practitioner are employed by the same agency (Health), but a Health Visitor and a Social Worker are employed by different agencies (Health and Social Care, respectively). Can be used synonymously with multidisciplinary or multi-professional work. See also **inter-agency work**, **multi-agency work**, **multidisciplinary or multi-professional work**.

Lead Professional: The person from a universal service who is appointed to oversee the work that flows from a common assessment framework (CAF). They have the responsibility of coordinating the actions described in the CAF, of being a single point of contact for families, and ensuring that the other agencies deliver the services promised in the CAF. See also **common assessment framework (CAF)**, **universal service**.

Legislation: a law or collection of laws produced by successive governments which often reflect the beliefs and priorities of the particular government in power at the time. See also **guidance**, **state**, **statutory**.

Local authority: the administrative body at a local level that provides and oversees a variety of services such as social care or housing.

Looked after child (or child in care): a child who is in the care of the local authority, either as a result of a court order or a voluntary agreement between the parents and the local authority. They usually live away from their parents or main carers, but may in exceptional circumstances live at home with their parents or main carers. See also **care plan**, **child in need of protection**, **child in need of support**, **child requiring early help**, **local authority**, **personal education plan (PEP)**.

Multi-agency work: at least two workers from different agencies (or services) who carry out essentially different roles and who are engaged in joint work. See also **inter-agency work**, **inter-professional work**, **multidisciplinary work**.

Multidisciplinary or multi-professional work: at least two workers from different professional disciplines or job roles who are engaged in joint work. They may or may not be employed by the same agency. For example, a Health Visitor and a General Practitioner are employed by the same agency (Health), but a Health Visitor and a Social Worker are employed by different agencies (Health and Social Care, respectively). Can be used synonymously with inter-professional or interdisciplinary work. See also **inter-agency work**, **inter-professional or interdisciplinary work**, **multi-agency work**.

Parental responsibility: technically, this means the legal rights, duties, powers and responsibilities a parent has for a child. In practice, it is often used to mean that whoever has parental responsibility for a child (and this can include other family members or adults other than biological parents, as well as local authority social workers) has the right to make decisions about the child's care and upbringing.

Partnership: a term that is always used positively, partnership usually refers to a situation where at least two people from different professional backgrounds work together for a shared interest or goal.

Personal education plan (PEP): the multi-agency plan focussed on supporting the education of a looked after child. It should contain a record of the child's educational progress, short and long term educational target, a note of how all agencies involved will support the child, and the child's views on what will support their learning. It is the social worker's responsibility to ensure a PEP is completed. See also **care plan, looked-after child**.

Personal information: Information which could identify a living person, such as name, date of birth, address. See also **confidentiality, consent, information sharing, proportionality**.

Proportionality: the notion, within the information-sharing guidelines, that when one person shares information with someone else, they should only share the information that is needed to identify the problem or support the child. The sharing of information should be proportionate and should not include unnecessary information based on speculation or 'gossip'. See also **confidentiality, consent, information sharing, personal information**

Qualified right: A right under the Human Rights Act 1998 that is not an absolute right, in that a qualified right can be breached in certain circumstances. For example, under Article 8 of the Human Rights Act, everyone has the right to privacy, but this is a qualified right, as certain authorities, such as the police, can enter the private space of a home to arrest someone if a crime is suspected to have occurred, or if a child within the home is deemed to be in need of protection from significant harm. See also **absolute right**.

Safeguarding children: Although mentioned in the Children Act 1989, this is a term that since about 2003 has become more widely used in the everyday language of practitioners. In its fullest use, it is 'safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children'. The term encapsulates the prevention of harm, protection from harm and the provision of wider support for children and families. What used to be called 'child protection' is therefore seen now as one part of a broader agenda of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

Section 47 enquiries: the enquiries, led by the social worker, that follow a referral to children's social care that a child is or may be suffering, or at risk of suffering, significant harm. The enquiries may include discussions with professionals from various agencies, interviews with the child and parents, and a medical assessment of the child. The aim is to determine the level of risk to the child. See also **care proceedings, child in need of protection, child protection plan, child protection review conference, core group, initial child protection conference, significant harm, strategy discussion**.

Significant harm: serious harm that a child has experienced or is likely to experience that will have a severe impact on the child's health or development. Significant harm is categorized into four areas: physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse and neglect. See also **child in need of protection**.

Social construction (of childhood): The idea that what constitutes 'childhood' is socially constructed across time according to the prevailing social and cultural norms and imperatives of

different time periods, rather than childhood being a universal state across history. Social construction can also be applied to other areas, such as gender (what constitutes masculinity or femininity) or criminal justice (what constitutes a crime), as ideas about these change over time. See also **criminal justice system**.

Social exclusion: exclusion from the mainstream rights and privileges enjoyed by the majority of people, usually as a result of poverty or some other characteristic such as lack of education or race or disability.

Social housing: housing owned by local authorities or voluntary organizations that is allocated on the basis of need, and which is rented out at affordable rates. See also **local authority, voluntary organizations**.

Social pedagogy: an approach to working with children with its origins in mainland Europe, and which has now been adopted by many local authorities and other organizations in England. It refers to a holistic approach to the care and education of the 'whole' child across services in a manner which avoids a narrow focus on one aspect, such as education.

Social policy: government policies towards social welfare and protection. They often reflect the beliefs and priorities of particular governments that create them. For example, the Children Act 1989 emphasized the importance of the 'family' against the 'state' and enshrined in law the idea and practice of minimum intervention by services in the lives of families. In doing so, it reflects the position of the then Conservative government which was in power, who developed the legislation. See also **guidance, legislation, state, statutory**.

Special educational needs (SEN) support: a situation in which a child is deemed to have special educational needs (SEN) and the educational setting can alone provide and coordinate the support that is required. The SEN support is therefore not multi-agency in nature, as it only involves one agency, usually the school or early years setting. See also **child with special educational needs and disability (SEND), Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan**.

State: in social policy, the 'state' is used to mean the government, with all its apparatus, legislation and policy at its disposal. For example, 'state intervention' in family life could mean that the police and social workers (as representatives of the 'state') have the right to enter a private home in certain circumstances, to protect a child. See also **guidance, legislation, social policy, statutory**.

Statutory: required, permitted, or enacted by statute (a law or government guidance). For example, a statutory assessment is a social care assessment which a social worker *has to* offer or conduct in response to a child in need of support or in need of protection. See also **guidance, legislation, state, social policy**.

Statutory assessment: the assessment that must be offered (as it is required under statute) where a child is deemed to be in need of support, or in need of protection. Social workers lead on this multi-agency assessment. See also **guidance, legislation, social policy, state, statutory**.

Strategy discussion: the discussion that takes place, as part of Section 47 enquiries in relation to a child in need of protection, between the social worker (and possibly their line manager), the

referrer if a professional (members of the public making referrals would not be party to these discussions), the police and other agencies where appropriate. The purpose of the discussion is to share information and plan the enquiries to follow. See also **child in need of protection, child protection plan, child protection review conference, core group, initial child protection conference, Section 47 enquiries, significant harm**.

Structural barriers: barriers to multi-agency working that are inherent to the work, and which are not located within any individual and cannot usually be changed. See also **individualized barriers**.

Targeted services: services that are only offered to children who meet certain criteria, as they are more specialist services. Targeted services include, for example, educational psychology, mental health services and speech and language therapy. See also **universal services**.

Team Around the Child (TAC): usually used in relation to children requiring help, the TAC refers to a range of different practitioners from different services working together to support a child and their family. The members of the TAC are not part of one team, but rather come from their own professional services, and remain accountable to their own line managers, while working with each other to support the child, usually for a specified period of time, to agree, implement, monitor and review a support plan. Some local authorities use the phrase Team Around the Family (TAF) or even Team Around the Child and Family (TACF) as an alternative, and they mean the same thing as TAC. See also **child requiring early help, local authority**.

Universal services: services that are offered to all children who do not have to meet any criteria to use the service. Universal services include schools, family doctors and early years settings. 'Universal' does not necessarily mean free of charge. See also **targeted services**.

Voluntary organizations (or voluntary sector): organizations that are independent of government or local authority control that provide a service to meet an identified need. Any profits made are ploughed back into the organization rather than distributed to employees or shareholders. The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) is an example of a very large voluntary organization, although much smaller ones exist as well, often at a local level, such as foodbanks.

Youth offending team: the team of professionals from various discipline backgrounds, who are part of one team who work in the same office, and who work with children involved in the criminal justice system. The usual minimum composition is a probation officer, social worker, police officer, health professional and an education professional. It may also be called the youth offending service. See also **appropriate adult, criminal justice system**.