



Prifysgol Cymru
Y Drindod Dewi Sant
University of Wales
Trinity Saint David

Module code: BMHP5021

Module title:

**Protecting and Supporting Families in
Health and Care**

WEEK 4

History of child protection in the UK

*Trawsnewid Addysg; Trawsnewid Bywydau
Transforming Education; Transforming Lives*

22/10/2026



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Week beginning	Topic	Notes
1 2 nd October	Introduction to Children Rights and Parenting	
2 9 th October	Factors influencing the experiences of children and families	
3 16 th October	Safeguarding, assessment of needs and theories of child development	
4 23 rd October	History of children Protection in the UK	
5 30 th October	Policy and Legislation related to Child Protection	
6 6 th November	Multi and inter disciplinary responses and partnership with children, young people and families	
7 13 th November	Factors which impact on the multi and inter disciplinary responses and partnership working with families' practice	Submission of individual reference list for C1: Wednesday 11 th November (2pm)
8 20 th November	ASSESSMENT WEEK	Group discussions – Assignment Component 1
9 27 th November	Impact of emerging digital technologies on the role of practitioner and service user	Assignment Component 2 Submission: Monday 30 th November (2:00pm)
10 4 th December	Assignment Support	Assignment Component 2 Submission: Monday 30 th November (2:00pm)

Learning objectives

- Discuss the timeline for the emergence of practice in child safeguarding in the UK.
- Identify serious case reviews that impacted child protection policy and practice.

The emergence of practice in child safeguarding in the UK

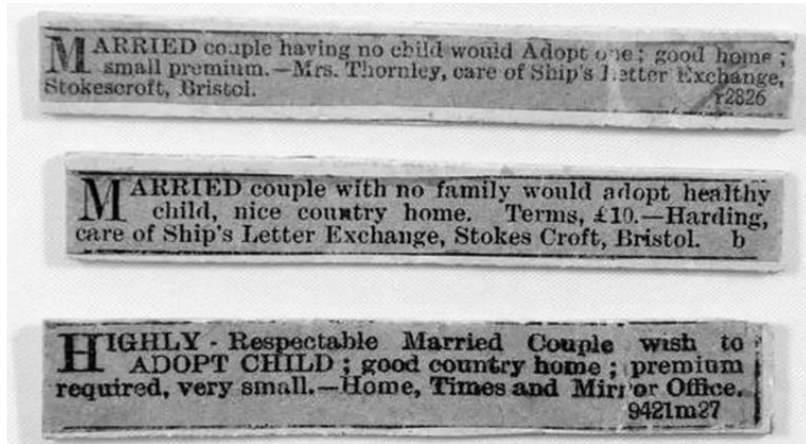
- The emergence of practice in child safeguarding in the UK has evolved over several decades, with significant milestones and influences shaping the timeline.
- Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews play a crucial role in highlighting failures in safeguarding and driving changes in policies and practices.

Timeline

- Legislation to prosecute people accused of child cruelty has been in force since the 1880s.
- Over time a range of factors, including some high-profile child abuse deaths and subsequent inquiries, have contributed to the development of the child protection system we have in the UK today.

Source: <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/child-protection-system/history-of-child-protection-in-the-uk>

Philanthropy



Amelia Dyer



Dr Barnardo



William Morris Stead



Josephine Butler

Whilst other philanthropic societies such as Barnardos, had been 'rescuing' children living outside their families, the NSPCC's concern was to 'rescue' children from living in their own home

Corby B, Shemmings D, Wilkins D (2012)

1872: Infant Life Protection Act & Baby Farming

Before 1889: Not the role of society to interfere in families

After 1889: The State would interfere to protect children

The Prevention of Cruelty to Children Act



CHAPTER 44.

An Act for the Prevention of Cruelty to, and better Protection of, Children. [20th August 1889.] A.D. 1889. —

BE it enacted by the Queen's most Excellent Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons, in this present Parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

1. Any person over sixteen years of age who, having the custody, control, or charge of a child, being a boy under the age of fourteen years, or being a girl under the age of sixteen years, wilfully ill-treats, neglects, abandons, or exposes such child, or causes or procures such child to be ill-treated, neglected, abandoned, or exposed, in a manner likely to cause such child unnecessary suffering, or injury to its health, shall be guilty of a misdemeanor, and, on conviction thereof on indictment, shall be liable, at the discretion of the court, to a fine not exceeding one hundred pounds, or alternatively, or in default of payment of such fine, or in addition to payment thereof, to imprisonment, with or without hard labour, for any term not exceeding two years, and on conviction thereof by a court of summary jurisdiction, in manner provided by the Summary Jurisdiction Acts, shall be liable, at the discretion of the court, to a fine not exceeding twenty-five pounds, or alternatively, or in default of payment of such fine, or in addition thereto, to imprisonment, with or without hard labour, for any term not exceeding three months.

Punishment for ill-treatment and neglect of children.

2. If it be proved that a person convicted on indictment as aforesaid was interested in any sum of money accruable or payable in the event of the death of the child, and had knowledge that such sum of money was accruing or becoming payable, the court may, in its discretion, increase the amount of the said fine so that the fine shall not exceed two hundred pounds. Such interest as aforesaid in any sum of money accruable or payable in the event of the death of the child shall be charged in the indictment and put to the jury in the same way, as far as may be, as a previous conviction is now charged and put.

Power to increase fine where offender interested in death of child.

3. Any person who—

(a) causes or procures any child, being a boy under the age of fourteen years, or being a girl under the age of sixteen years,

Restrictions on employment of children.

1945 – The first child abuse inquiry

The first formal child death inquiry took place in England in 1945 into the death of Dennis O'Neill, who was killed at the age of 12 by his foster father.



- A clerk from Newport, Miss EM Edwards, was asked to visit Dennis and his brother. In her report she recommended the “immediate removal” of the boys and commented that she “several times impressed upon Mrs Gough the necessity of calling in a doctor for Dennis”. Neither authority responded with any urgency.
- In Shropshire, the report was put aside for an officer to deal with “on his return from annual leave on the 10 January” – Dennis died on 9 January.

- Sir Walter Monckton's one-man, four-day inquiry opened on 10 April 1945. He found that the Goughs had been selected "without adequate inquiry being made as to their suitability" and that "there had been a serious lack of supervision by the local authority".
- The issues that contributed to his death – poor record-keeping and filing, unsuitable appointments, lack of partnership working, resource concerns, failing to act on warning signs, weak supervision and "a lamentable failure of communication"

- Monckton's findings led to the setting up of the Committee on the Care of Children, which itself inspired the Children Act 1948.
- This advocated keeping children with their birth mother where possible.
- In 1952, the publication of the first volume of John Bowlby's influential work *Attachment and Loss*, the primary importance of birth families was secured.

The Children Act 1948

- Dennis O'Neill's case led to the setting up of the Committee on the Care of Children, which itself inspired the Children Act 1948.
- This advocated keeping children with their birth mother where possible.
- Indeed, with the publication, in 1952, of the first volume of John Bowlby's influential work Attachment and Loss, the primary importance of birth families was secured.

1973 – Reforms made to the child protection system

- Maria Colwell had been fostered by her aunt and uncle for five years because her mother couldn't cope with bringing up five children. Then Pauline decided she wanted Maria back. Guided by the notion of the birth mother's rights, Maria was returned to Pauline on 22 October 1971 and moved into the council house she shared with her future husband
- The inquiry highlighted a serious lack of coordination among services responsible for child welfare.
- Its report led to the development of Area Child Protection Committees (ACPCs) in England and Wales, which coordinate local efforts to safeguard children at risk.



1975 – Children Act

The [Children Act 1975](#) built on the 1945 Act and highlighted the importance of children's welfare, particularly in the area of adoption and fostering

- It established the role of an independent social worker who would ensure the best interests of the child during court proceedings. The Act reinforced the principle that the welfare of the child should be the primary consideration in all court decisions concerning children.
- Interventions with families with children considered to be at risk became more focused and intrusive. It emphasised the need of children being distinct from their parents

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is a legally-binding international agreement setting out the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of every child, regardless of their race, religion or abilities.

- The Convention's history began with preparations for the 1979 International Year of the Child
- The UN General Assembly adopted the UNCRC on November 20, 1989, and it entered into force on September 2, 1990.
- The UNCRC is the most widely ratified international human rights treaty, with 196 countries having ratified it, including every member of the United Nations except for the United States.
- **Key Principles:** The UNCRC recognises that every child should be recognized, respected, and protected as a rights holder and as a unique and valuable human being.

The Cleveland Report 1988

In 1987, over the course of a few months, 121 children were removed from their families in the English county of Cleveland because of concerns of sexual abuse highlighted through medical examinations and wider assessment.

A public outcry followed, involving local politicians, local and national media, parents, and professionals from different agencies with safeguarding responsibilities, who could not accept that so many children had been sexually abused.

The result was local and national hysteria and panic that over-zealous practitioners were wrongly identifying child sexual abuse. Then the professional judgement of those working with the children was challenged. An Inquiry was commissioned by the Government and a report was published

1988 – Working together guidance first published

- The first edition of Working Together consolidated guidance and recommendations on procedures for the care and protection of abused children and children at risk in **England** and **Wales**.
- Working Together: a guide to arrangements for inter-agency co-operation for the protection of children from abuse - also introduced serious case reviews (SCRs), referred to at the time as case reviews, for the first time.

1989 – Children Act for England and Wales

The [Children Act 1989](#) established the legislative framework for the current child protection system in **England** and **Wales**.

It sets out the paramountcy principle – that the welfare of the child should be the court's main consideration. The Act is more concerned with the setting out parental responsibility rather than power

- Empowering children to refuse to undergo medical assessments
- The legal rights of parents strengthened, and the discretionary powers of professionals reduced including making provision for parents have contact with children in care
- Also influences by case law proceedings e.g. Gillick competence (1986)



Children Act 1989

Child In Need

Children Act 1989 (Section 17)

Children are defined as being “in need” when their vulnerability is such that:

- They are unlikely to achieve or maintain, a satisfactory level of health or development without the provision of services by a local authority
- Their health or development will be significantly impaired without the provision of such services
- They are disabled – children automatically defined as Children In Need (CIN)

At Risk of Significant Harm

Children Act 1989 (Section 47)

The Local Authority has a duty to make enquiries when they have reasonable cause to suspect that a child who lives, or is found, in their area is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm **to enable them to decide whether they should take action to safeguard or promote the child's welfare**

Background to current practice

1989- The Children Act

2000- Victoria Climbié

2003- Lord Laming's Inquiry

2004- Children Act (and Every Child Matters)

2006 - Every Disabled Child Matters

2007 – Aiming High for Disabled Children

2007- Peter Connolly

2011- The Munro Review of Child Protection
Procedures final report: The Child's Journey

2012- Daniel Pelka

2023- Sara Sharif

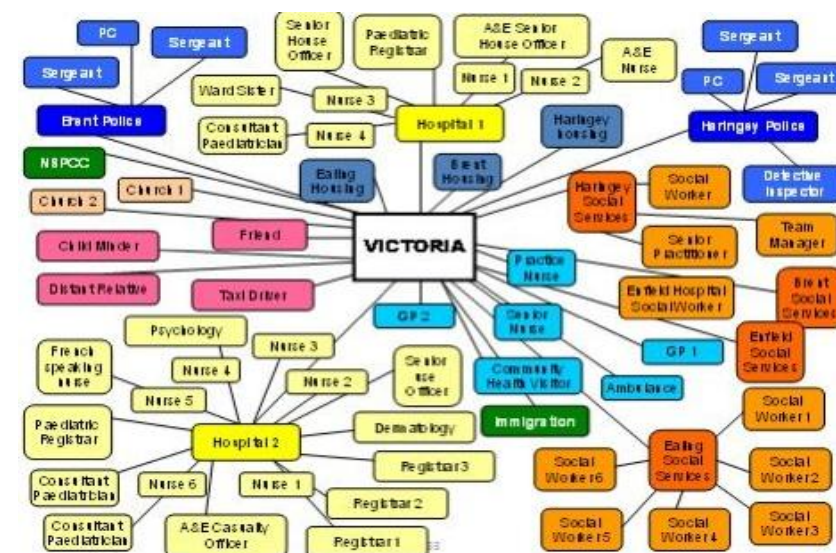
2024- [Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill](#)



2000 - Victoria Climbié

On 25th February 2000, Victoria Climbié is declared dead after several months of abuse and neglect.

Impacts on practice: This led to the creation of the policy Every Child Matters.



Laming Review 2003

The findings of the Inquiry (the Laming Report) were damning, not only about individual practice failings, poor or non-existent inter-agency working and the lack of focus on the child, Victoria, but also, for the first time, about the failure of senior managers in various organisations to account for the shortcomings

What do we want for every child?

S

H

E

E

P

Every Child Matters

In 2003, the Government published the *Every Child Matters* Green Paper alongside the formal response to the report into the death of Victoria Climbié. The Children Act 2004 subsequently became law and set out these outcomes in statute.

Key to children and young people's wellbeing and the aim for every child is:

- stay **S**afe
- be **H**ealthy
- **E**njoy and achieve
- achieve **E**conomic wellbeing
- make a **P**ositive contribution



2002 – Reforms to child protection legislation

- Holly Wells and Jessica Chapman, both aged 10, were killed by Ian Huntley, a school caretaker. He had previously been investigated by police for crimes including burglary, indecent assault and rape.
- **Impacts on practice:** This led to the strengthening of legislation across the UK to protect children from adults working with children who pose a risk to them, including the [Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006](#) in **England, Northern Ireland** and **Wales**



Children's Act 2004

The Children Act 2004, informed by Lord Laming's report, established:

- A Children's Commissioner in England (the last of the UK nations to appoint one)
- Created Local Safeguarding Children's Boards (LSCBs) in England and Wales; and
- Placed a duty on local authorities in England to appoint a director of children's services

It aimed to improve and integrate children's services, promote early intervention, provide strong leadership and bring together different professionals in multi-disciplinary teams in order achieve positive outcomes for children and young people and their families.

2008 –The case of Peter Connelly (Baby P)

The death of one-year-old Peter Connelly (Baby P) following abuse and neglect by his mother, her boyfriend and her boyfriend's brother, led to further reviews of social service care in England by Lord Laming, with the House of Commons debating the case.



2011: Munro Review – recommended a shift towards a child-centred system that values professional expertise and focuses on safety and welfare, rather than being over-bureaucratized and compliance-focused

'So called' Honour Based Abuse

1985 – Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) becomes a criminal offence. It takes until 2019 for the first prosecution under the Act.

1991 – Marital rape criminalised.

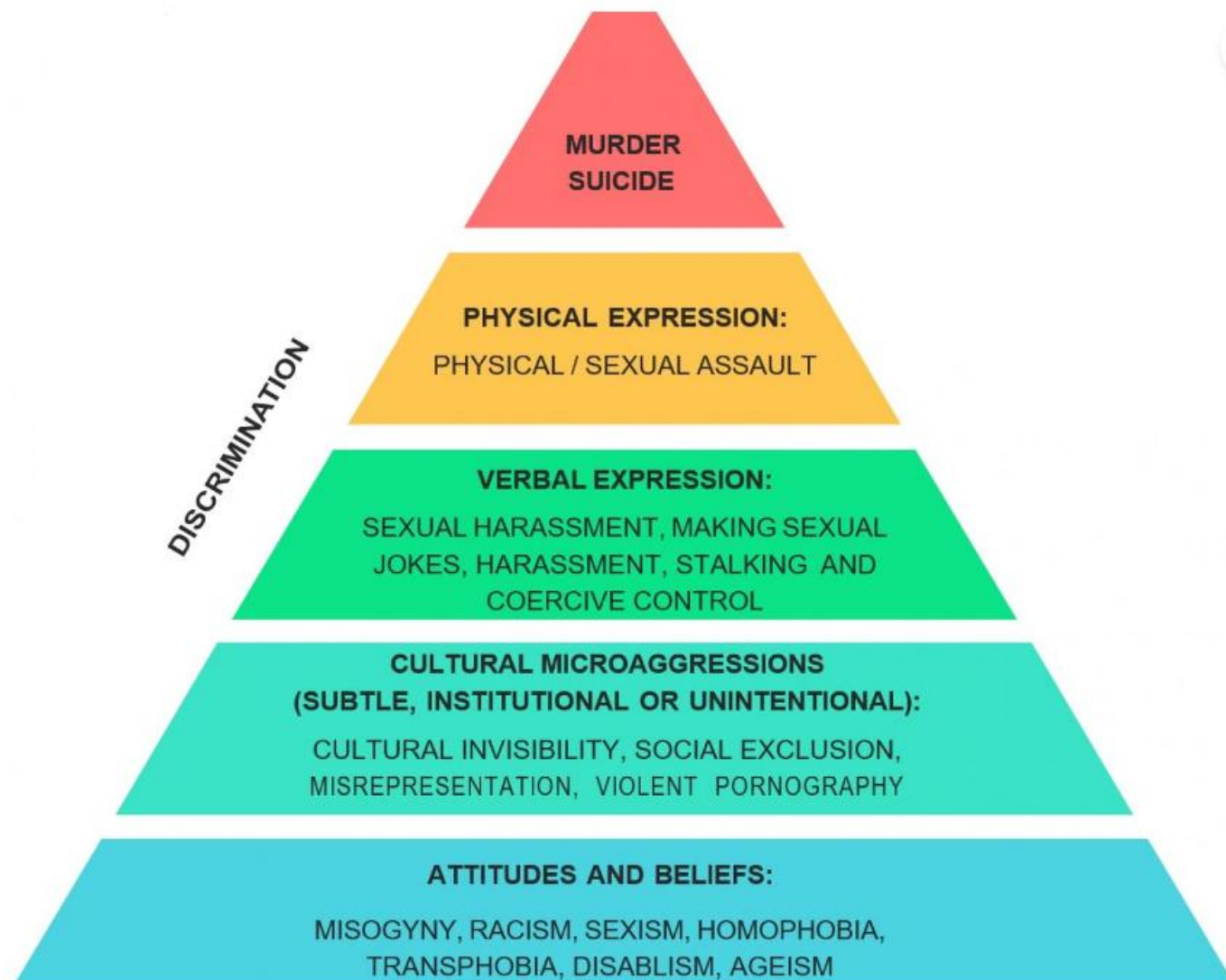
1993 – Violence against women and girls recognised as human rights violation

2003 – New FGM Act increased penalties, and explicitly covered UK nationals who took children abroad for FGM

2023 - Civil Marriage Partnership Act withdraws parents' ability to consent to marriage under 18



Gender-based abuse as a social construct



Domestic Abuse Legislation

- **2014 – Clare’s Law** – gives anyone concerned about their partner’s behaviour the right to ask and the right to know about their partner’s criminal records.
- **2015 – Serious Crime Act** criminalises Coercive control.
- **2021 – Domestic Abuse Act becomes law** – legally defining what domestic abuse is, recognising children in their own right.

Clare's Law 2014

The Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS), also known as “Clare’s Law” enables the police to disclose information to a victim or potential victim of domestic abuse about their partner’s or ex-partner’s previous abusive or violent offending.



The scheme has two elements: the “Right to Ask” and the “Right to Know”.

- Under the scheme an individual or relevant third party (for example, a family member) can ask the police to check whether a current or ex-partner has a violent or abusive past. This is the “Right to Ask”. If records show that an individual may be at risk of domestic abuse from a partner or ex-partner, the police will consider disclosing the information.
- The “Right to Know” enables the police to make a disclosure on their own initiative if they receive information about the violent or abusive behaviour of a person that may impact on the safety of that person’s current or ex-partner.

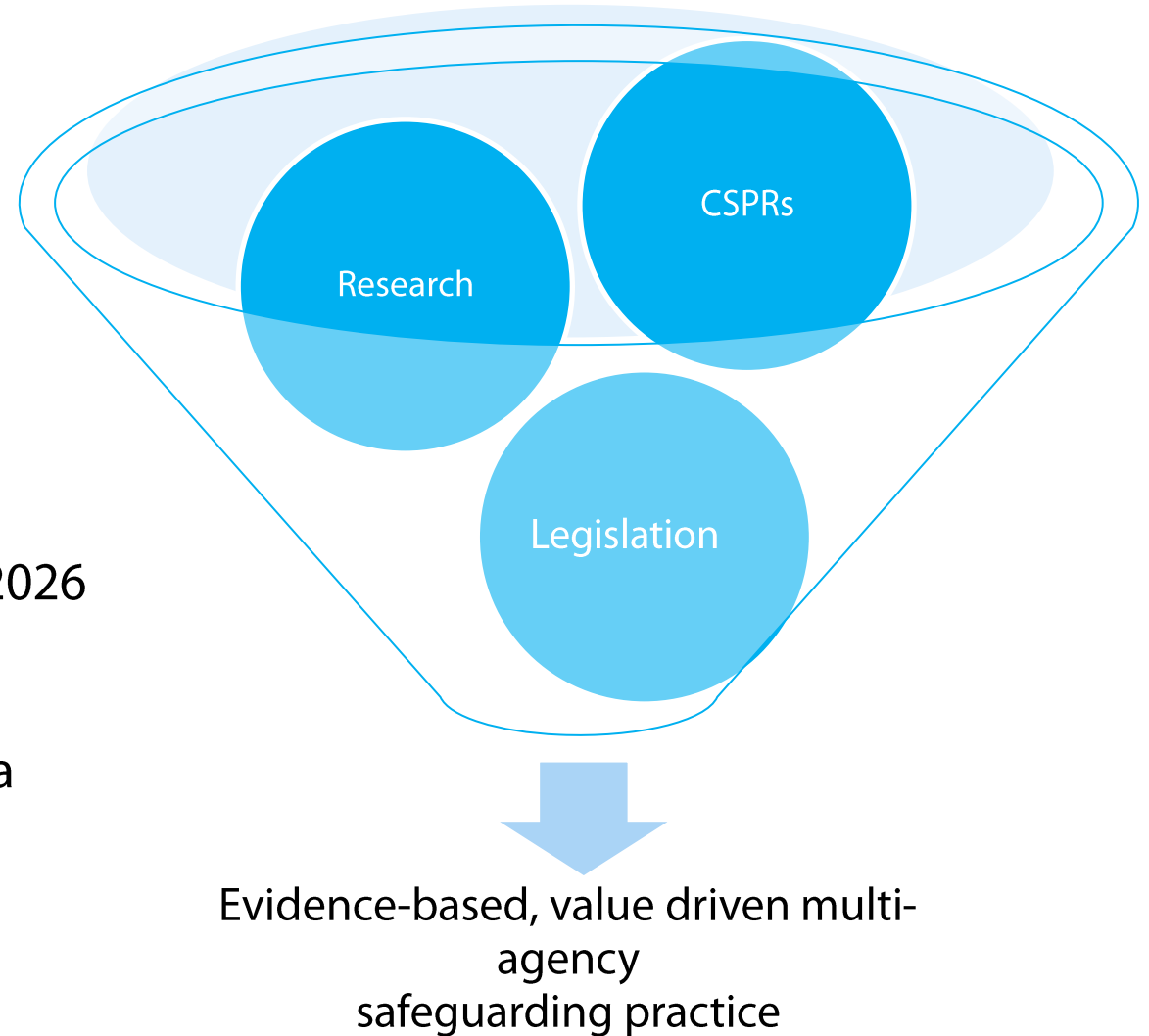
Learning about safeguarding children and child protection

Examples:

Research: [Adverse Childhood Experiences](#)

Legislation: Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026 and new information sharing guidance

Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews: Baby Victoria



The new [Department for Education \(DfE\)](#)

Information Sharing Duty Statutory Guidance 2026

1. Information sharing is now a statutory duty

The most significant change is that agencies and practitioners who hold relevant safeguarding information **must share it**, unless a very limited exception applies. This moves practice away from the previous position where practitioners often had to decide whether they could share information. The new emphasis is on whether there is a reason **not** to share it.

2. Early help information is included

The duty is not restricted to situations involving significant harm or child protection concerns. Information that may support:

- Early help
- Prevention of harm
- Safeguarding
- Promotion of welfare

should also be shared when relevant. This reinforces a preventative, child-centred approach.

3. The presumption is to share

The guidance introduces a clear expectation that information should be shared where it may be relevant to a child's welfare. Practitioners should begin from a position of asking: *"What information may help other agencies safeguard or promote the welfare of this child?"* rather than focusing on barriers to sharing.

4. Information held about adults may be relevant

The guidance strengthens expectations around sharing information concerning:

- Parents
- Carers
- Family members
- Other adults connected to the child

where that information could affect a child's welfare or safety. Practitioners are encouraged to think holistically about a child's circumstances.

Activity

Identifying Elements of Vulnerability:

1. Work in your groups to discuss and document the needs of the child and family and risks presented for the child
2. Work in your groups to identify the current legislation and national policy related to safeguarding and the vulnerabilities within the Child Safeguarding Practice Review you have chosen.

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