

Oldham Safeguarding Children Partnership  
Multi-Agency Practice Standards  
October 2024



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# Oldham Safeguarding Children Partnership Multi-Agency Practice Standards 24.

## Introduction

These multi-agency practice standards have been developed by Oldham Safeguarding Children Partnership (OSCP) to set out the expected standards of practice for all professionals working with children and families in Oldham, recognising that early help and effective safeguarding arrangements are everyone's responsibility.

The standards should be read in conjunction with the OSCP Continuum of Need 24. They reflect the requirements of Working Together 2023 and Greater Manchester Safeguarding policies and procedures.

## Using the standards

These standards have been developed as a guide to support workers. The aim is to help workers consider what their strengths are when working with children, young people and their families, and what they can do to develop these further. The standards can be used flexibly in a number of situations.

Working Together to Safeguarding Children (2023) outlines that everyone who works with children, introduce national multi-agency practice standards for child protection as part of the ambition to establish a sure and decisive child protection system.

## **Multi- Agency Strategic Leadership and Accountability**

Strong, joined-up leadership and clear accountability is critical to effective multiagency safeguarding, bringing together the various organisations and agencies. It is therefore important that the head of each statutory safeguarding partner agency plays an active role in these arrangements.

Partners will:

- speak with authority for the safeguarding partner they represent
- take decisions on behalf of their organisation or agency and commit them on policy, resourcing, and practice matters
- hold their own organisation or agency to account on how effectively they participate and implement the local arrangements

## **Multi- Agency Relevant Agencies**

Relevant agencies are those organisations and agencies who are involved in the safeguarding partnership consider how they will safeguard and promote the welfare of local children.

As a relevant agency, you will have strong, effective multi-agency safeguarding arrangements that are responsive to local circumstances and engage the right people in a collaborative way.

The approach requires flexibility from all relevant agencies, to enable joint identification and response to existing and emerging needs, and to agree priorities to improve outcomes for children.

As a relevant agency, you have a pivotal role to play in children's daily lives to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

## **Local criteria for providing help, support, and protection.**

The Oldham Children Social Care Practice Standards 24 sets out the criteria for action in a way that is transparent, evidence-based, accessible, and easily understood. This includes the process for early help assessments, and the type and level of early help and targeted early help services provided.

You will make use of local tools and guidance to gather information in a structured way, for example Neglect and the Graded Care Profile 2 document. (GCP2)

Your assessment needs to be fit for purpose and completed in a timely manner to prevent delay.

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[CSC Practice Standards](#)

[Refreshed Continuum of Need](#)

## **Training opportunities.**

You will access multi-agency and multi-disciplinary training to understanding the demographics and needs of the local community, the local practice framework, and the services available to support children.

All practitioners working with children and families, including those in universal services and those providing services to adults with children, will understand their role in identifying emerging problems.

Organisations and agencies will access appropriate training so that they:

- know when to share information with other practitioners and what action to take to support early identification and assessment
- are able to identify and recognise all forms of abuse, neglect, and exploitation
- have an understanding of domestic and sexual abuse, including controlling and coercive behaviour
- are aware of new and emerging threats, including online harm, grooming, sexual exploitation, criminal exploitation, radicalisation, and the role of technology and social media in presenting harm
- are aware that a child and their family may be experiencing multiple needs at the same time.

[Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023](#)

## **Supporting children at risk of, or experiencing harm outside the home**

Children of all ages can experience extra-familial harm. Where there are concerns that a child is experiencing extra-familial harm, you will consider all the needs and vulnerabilities of the child. Some children will have vulnerabilities that can be exploited by others and will require support appropriate to their needs to minimise the potential for exploitation.

## **Working Together 23: National multi-agency practice standards for child protection.**

The following national multi-agency practice standards for child protection are for all practitioners working in services and settings who come into contact with children who may be suffering or have suffered significant harm within or outside the home.

You will ensure all practitioners are supported to be able to achieve the child protection standards through:

- an unrelenting focus on protection and the best outcomes for children
- creating learning cultures in which practitioners stay up to date as new evidence of best practice emerges
- creating an environment in which it is safe to challenge, including assumptions that relate to ethnicity, sex, disability, and sexuality
- supporting practitioners with effective supervision as determined by their regulatory body in which they can critically reflect on their findings and strengthen their analysis
- helping practitioners to understand the impact of their decisions on the child and family

### **Organisational responsibilities**

You are working with children and families and have specific statutory duties to promote the welfare of children and ensure they are protected from harm.

These duties are set out in Working Together 23.

You will have in place arrangements that reflect the importance of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, including:

- a clear line of accountability for the commissioning and/or provision of services designed to safeguard and promote the welfare of children
- a senior board level lead with the required knowledge, skills, and expertise or sufficiently qualified and experienced to take leadership responsibility for the organisation's or agency's safeguarding arrangements
- a culture of listening to children and taking account of their wishes and feelings, both in individual decisions and the development of services
- clear whistleblowing procedures
- clear escalation policies for staff to follow when their child safeguarding concerns are not being addressed within their

- organisation or by other agencies
- arrangements which set out clearly the processes for sharing information, with other practitioners and with safeguarding partners
  - a designated practitioner for child safeguarding.
  - safe recruitment practices and ongoing safe working practices for individuals whom the organisation or agency permit to work regularly with children, including policies on when to obtain a criminal record check
  - appropriate supervision and support for staff, including undertaking safeguarding training
  - creating a culture of safety, equality, and protection within the services they provide
  - employers being responsible for ensuring that their staff are competent to carry out their responsibilities
  - staff are given a mandatory induction, which includes familiarisation with child protection responsibilities and the procedures to be followed if anyone has any concerns about a child's safety or welfare
  - all practitioners have regular reviews of their own practice to ensure they have knowledge, skills and expertise that improve over time.

***All the above will be outlined in your Section 11 audit report.***

### **Working Together 23: Designated Health Practitioners.**

- Health have in place, a contractual agreement to secure the expertise of designated practitioners, such as dedicated designated doctors and nurses for safeguarding children and dedicated designated doctors and nurses for looked after children (and designated doctor or pediatrician for unexpected deaths in childhood).
- The NHS commissioners and providers ensure that designated professionals are given sufficient time to be fully engaged, involved, and included in safeguarding arrangements.
- There is a dedicated named doctor and a named nurse (and a named midwife if the organisation or agency provides maternity services) for safeguarding children.
- There is a named practitioner in ambulance trusts and independent providers.
- Named practitioners have a key role in promoting good professional practice within the organisation and agency, providing advice and expertise for fellow practitioners, and ensure safeguarding training is in place. They work closely with their organisations or agency's safeguarding lead on the executive board, designated health professionals for the health economy and other statutory safeguarding partners.

- ICBs have named GPs for safeguarding children to advise and support GP practice safeguarding leads. GP practices have a lead and deputy lead for safeguarding.
- Other public, voluntary, and independent sector organisations, agencies and social enterprises providing NHS services to children and families ensure that they follow Working Together 23.

## Working Together 23: Police.

- Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) hold the Chief Constable to account for the exercise of the latter's duties in relation to safeguarding children.
- Officers and other police employees, such as Police Community Support Officers, are well placed to identify early when a child's welfare is at risk and when a child may need protection from harm.
- Children have the right to the full protection offered by criminal law.
- In addition to identifying when a child may be a victim of a crime, police officers are aware of the effect of other incidents which might pose safeguarding risks to children and where officers should pay particular attention.
- An officer attending a domestic abuse incident are aware of the effect of such behaviour on any children in the household and recognise that children who see, hear, or experience the effects of domestic abuse are victims in their own right.
- Children who are encountered as offenders, or alleged offenders, are entitled to the same safeguards and protection as any other child and due regard is given to their safety and welfare at all times..
- Consideration is given to the potential impact an arrest or seizure of items may have upon a child's immediate and ongoing safety and whether there is actual or likely significant harm.
- Police hold important information about children who may be suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm, as well as those who cause such harm. They always share this information with other organisations and agencies where this is necessary to protect children.
- Other organisations and agencies share information to enable the police to carry out their duties.
- Officers are trained in child abuse investigation and safeguarding responsibilities.
- Officers making decisions about whether children are referred into children's social care are confident in understanding and applying the local threshold document.
- The police will remove a child to suitable accommodation under section 46 of the Children Act 1989, if they have reasonable cause to believe that the child would otherwise be likely to suffer significant harm.
- Statutory powers to enter premises are used with this section 46 power, and in circumstances to ensure the child's



immediate protection.

- A child under police protection will not be brought to a police station except in exceptional circumstances, such as a lack of immediately available local authority accommodation, and then only for a short period.
- When providing services to adults, staff ask whether there are children in the family and take actions to respond if the children need help or protection from harm.

## All relevant Agencies:

The standards set out below are for all practitioners working in services and settings who come into contact with children who may be suffering or have suffered significant harm within or outside the home.

## Early Help

[\(Family Help Tool | Oldham Council\)](#)  
[Oldham Team Around the Family | Oldham Council](#)

Effective multi- agency working, relies upon local organisations, partners and agencies working together.

You will:

- identify children and families who would benefit from early help
- undertake an assessment of the need for early help which considers the needs of all members of the family
- ensure there is good ongoing communication between practitioners who are working with the family
- co-ordinate and/or provide support as part of a plan to improve outcomes.
- engage effectively with families and their family network, making use of family group decision-making, to help meet the needs of the child.

## Identifying children and families who would benefit from help

You will have in place effective ways to identify emerging problems and potential unmet needs of individual children and families.

You will work with Oldham Council to develop joined-up early help services.

## Effective assessment of the need for Early Help

Where a child and family would benefit from coordinated support from more than one organisation or agency (for example, education, health, housing) there will be a multi-agency assessment.

These assessments will:

- cover the reason for assessment
- be undertaken with the agreement of the child and their parents or carers, involving the child and family as well as all the practitioners who are working with them
- cover the child's experience and understanding
- cover the strengths and needs for the child and parents and analyses the impact of these
- cover how the analysis leads to the decisions and actions
- cover how the child's situation will be kept under review – the child / young person and their families wishes and feelings.
- Practitioners will be aware of situations where there has been a breakdown in relationship between the child and their family and engaging the whole family may not be appropriate
- cover both presenting needs and any underlying issues with the understanding that a family's needs can change overtime.
- be factual and clear

**If at any time it is considered that the child may be a child in need, as defined in the Children Act 1989, a referral will be made to children's social care.**

**Practitioners will ensure that the family has understood that the support and services provided. If there are concerns that the child has suffered significant harm or is likely to do so, a referral will be made immediately to children's social care.**

## Referrals

Anyone who has concerns about a child's welfare will consider whether a referral needs to be made to social care and should do so immediately if there is a concern that the child is suffering significant harm or is likely to do so.

(Where a child is admitted to a mental health facility, practitioners will make a referral to children's social care)

When you refer a child, it will include any information you have on the child's developmental needs, the capacity of the child's parents, carers, or family network to meet those needs and any external factors that may be undermining their capacity to parent.

As a relevant agency you will:

- ensure all practitioners are alert to potential indicators of abuse, neglect, and exploitation, and listen carefully to what a child says, how they behave, and observe how they communicate if non-verbal (due to age, special needs and/or disabilities, or if unwilling to communicate).
- ensure practitioners will work hard to understand the child's personal experiences and observe and record any concerns.
- ensure practitioners will always communicate in a way that is appropriate to the child's age and level of understanding and use evidence-based practice tools for engaging with children, including those with special educational needs and disabilities.
- ensure when practitioners have concerns or information about a child that may indicate a child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm, they share them with relevant practitioners and escalate them if necessary, using the referral or escalation procedure in place within their local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements.
- ensure that all the child's relevant information is shared at the point of referral; to provide context, history and the child's lived experiences (chronology of events or concerns)
- ensure they update colleagues when they receive relevant new information.
- ensure practitioners never assume that information has already been shared by another professional or family member and always remain open to changing their views about the likelihood of significant harm.

## Voice of the Child

Ofsted published a thematic report. The voice of the child: learning lessons from serious case reviews.

The main focus of the report is on the importance of listening to the voice of the child.

(See Appendix 1: Summary of findings)

[Voice of the Child Ofsted](#)

## How to capture the 'Voice of the Child'

Capturing the 'voice of the child' can be achieved by:

- Working directly with the child
- Observing the child
- Seeking the views of other significant people in the child's life such as family members and teachers

All professionals should ensure that the 'voice of the child' runs through everything they do and the child's viewpoint is included in any assessment that affects them and any work undertaken. It should be seen to impact and be reflected in Referrals, Assessments and plans, Court Statements, Visit records, within Chronologies, Supervision Records and all Management oversight.

In order to communicate effectively with children and young people, professionals need to be confident and have a range of skills.

These include:

- From the outset, establishing ground rules, being clear on professional boundaries; effective contracting. Explaining the boundaries of confidentiality
- Developing trusting relationships

- Building rapport
- Empathising with the child's point of view
- Understanding non-verbal communication
- Active listening
- Explaining, summarising and providing information
- Giving feedback in a clear way
- Working at the child's pace

## **Section 47 enquiries, child protection conferences and child protection plans:**

Alongside the offer of help and support, you will have strong and effective multiagency child protection arrangements.

You understand that the suffering or being likely to suffer significant harm is the threshold for child protection enquiries and can take different forms.

Where the decision is taken not to proceed with a child protection plan or to discharge the plan, you will consider the support that the child requires, which might include multi-agency support and/or continued support.

You will ensure that:

- Practitioners are aware of the limits and strengths of their personal expertise and agency remit.
- Practitioners work collaboratively and proactively with multi-agency teams to build an accurate and comprehensive understanding of the daily life of a child and their family to establish the likelihood of significant harm and any ongoing risks.
- Practitioners respect the opinions, knowledge and skills of multi-agency colleagues and engage constructively in their challenge.
- Practitioners apply understanding of what constitutes a child suffering actual or likely significant harm. They consider the severity, duration and frequency of any abuse, degree of threat, coercion, or cruelty, the significance of others in the child's world, including all adults and children in contact with the child (this can include those within the immediate and wider family and those in contexts beyond the family, including online), and the cumulative impact of adverse events.
- Practitioners engage parents and the family network, as appropriate, in the discussions, recognising previous

- involvement with agencies and services may influence how they engage.
- Practitioners encourage parents and families to express what support would help them to reduce significant harm.
  - Practitioners thoroughly explore the significance of the adults in contact with the child and their family or individual histories. They pay particular attention to any serious criminal convictions, previous allegations of child abuse, domestic abuse or impulsive violent behaviour, restrictions on contact with children or involvement with children subject to child protection plans or care proceedings.
  - Practitioners satisfy themselves that conclusions about the likelihood of significant harm give sufficient weight to the views, experiences, and concerns of those who know the child and/or parents well, including relatives who are protective of the child, and other relevant practitioners.
  - Practitioners remain alert to changes in circumstances for the child and family and respond appropriately
  - Practitioners work as part of a multi-agency team to create lasting change for families and ensure the child, parents and family network know that further help and support is available if needed or further concerns arise.

Useful links.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>

[Information Sharing advice for Practitioners](#)

[Safeguarding Children - Fabricated or induced illness](#)

[Policy and procedures for safeguarding people at risk of being drawn into terrorism, or extremism leading to terrorism](#)

<https://www.olscb.org/cms-data/depot/hipwig/Flow-chart-Dispute-Resolution-Pathway.pdf>

[Greater Manchester Safeguarding Children Procedures Manual](#)

[Voice of the Child Ofsted](#)

**Appendix 1: Summary of findings**  
**Voice of the child: learning lessons from serious case reviews.**  
**Ofsted.**  
**Published: April 2011**  
**Reference No:10224**

Five main themes were identified with regard to professionals not listening to the 'voice of the child':

1. Seeing and Hearing the Child - The child was not seen frequently enough by the professionals involved or was not asked about their views and feelings.

**Practitioners should:**

- Use direct observation of babies and young children by a range of people and make sense of these observations in relation to risk factors.
- See children and young people in places that meet their needs e.g. in places that are familiar to them
- Ensure that the assessment of the needs of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities identifies and includes needs relating to protection

2. Listening to Adults who speak on behalf of the Child - Agencies did not listen to adults who tried to speak on behalf of the child and who had important information to contribute.

**Practitioners should:**

- When assessing risk and gathering information needed to make an assessment, routinely involve fathers and other male figures (whether absent or living in the family home), as well as teachers, other professionals and the views of all adults involved in the child's life.

3. Being alert to Parents and Carers who prevent access to the Child - Parents and carers prevent professionals from seeing and listening to the child.

Practitioners should:

- Consider the implications of risk to children where practitioners themselves have concerns for their own personal safety when meeting families or on home visits
- Ensure that respect for family privacy is not at the expense of safeguarding children

4. Focusing on the Child rather than the needs of Parents and Carers - Professionals focused too much on the needs of parents, especially vulnerable parents, and overlooked the implications for the child.

Practitioners should:

- Recognise the specific needs of children and young people who have a caring responsibility for their parents and carers
- Always consider the implications of any domestic abuse for children and young people including unborn babies
- Be alert to how acute awareness of the needs of parents and carers can mask the needs of the child

5. Interpreting what Children say in order to protect them - Agencies did not interpret their findings well enough to protect the child

Practitioners should:

- Ensure that actions take account of children and young people's needs and views
- Recognise any behaviour in the child or young person as a means of communication
- Understand and respond to any behavioural indicators of abuse and/or neglect
- Sensitively balance children's and young people's views with safeguarding their welfare