

# Changes to Working Together to Safeguard Children - December 2020

In December 2020, Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 was updated.

## Contextual safeguarding

**Contextual safeguarding** was renamed in the guidance as “assessment of risk outside the home” (p.25) and teenage relationship abuse has been added as an area of risk, however the primary content of this section has not changed.

## Mental health concerns

The importance of mental health concerns for children has been emphasised throughout the revised document. Mental health has been added to physical health (p.7 & p.14) and the significance of mental health concerns about a child have been linked to abuse, neglect, or exploitation. While aimed at school staff, the advice to refer concerns about a child’s mental health to children’s services while not making mental health diagnoses (p.18), is relevant to other roles.

## Domestic abuse

The impact of domestic abuse, including controlling or coercive behaviour, has been integrated throughout the revised guidance. Both domestic violence and controlling and coercive control have been added to the definitions within (p.110 & 111). The changes state (p.14) that practitioners need to develop their knowledge and skills in addressing the impact that domestic violence has upon children, both as witnesses and by being forced to collude in this.

## Criminal exploitation

Criminal exploitation has been added to the areas of risk in which practitioners should be developing their skills and knowledge to address (p.14). The **National Working Group** has provided resources and training to support organisations in this area.

## Information sharing

This information has been refined in response to the **Data Protection Act 2018** and General Data Protection Regulation (**GDPR**). This includes guidance about appropriate information sharing of safeguarding and child protection concerns. This includes the explicit statement that data protection legislation does not prevent the sharing of information to keep a child safe and that consent is not required when sharing information for safeguarding and protecting the welfare of a child (p.19).

In making decisions about appropriate information sharing, the guidance recommends using GDPR **lawful bases** for sharing, i.e. **legal obligation** (the exercise of official authority) or **public task** (a task performed in the public interest). Further information about this is available in the new appendices (Appendix B) and includes a useful myth busting guide to information sharing (p.21).

It is also stated that (p.15), while encouraged, the agreement of the child and parents is not required to share information, although it is important to explain the reasons for this.

This strengthened guidance should support organisations in sharing information between themselves and with statutory bodies.

### **Homelessness duty**

The Homelessness duty has been added to this guidance (p.23) in relation to local authorities' duties to intervene at an earlier stage in homelessness. Full information is found in the [Homelessness Code of Guidance](#).

'Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015' and 'Working Together: transitional guidance' has been removed this had been included for the transition period from LSCBs to LSCPs.

Courtesy of NSPCC.