

Briefing Paper: *Every Child Achieving and Thriving* – Implications for Safeguarding Partners

Newcastle Safeguarding Children Partnership (NSCP)

Date: February 2026

Audience: Statutory and relevant safeguarding partners across education, local authority services, health, police, voluntary and community sector

Purpose of this briefing

This briefing provides safeguarding partners with an overview of the Department for Education White Paper *Every Child Achieving and Thriving* (February 2026), summarises its key proposals, and sets out its relevance to safeguarding practice and partnership working in Newcastle.

Although framed as an education reform document, the White Paper represents a **significant shift in how children's welfare, safety, inclusion and wellbeing are understood as shared system responsibilities**. Many of its proposals align closely with statutory safeguarding duties and the priorities of local safeguarding partnerships.

Overview of the White Paper

Every Child Achieving and Thriving sets out a long-term national vision for children and young people, based on three connected shifts:

1. **From narrow to broad** – moving beyond a focus on academic outcomes alone to a broader understanding of childhood, wellbeing and development.
2. **From sidelined to included** – addressing the needs of children who experience disadvantage, exclusion or unmet SEND.
3. **From withdrawn to engaged** – tackling disengagement from education, poor attendance and lack of belonging.

The White Paper emphasises that **children's safety, wellbeing and educational success are inseparable**, and that failures in early identification, inclusion or coordinated support increase vulnerability and safeguarding risk.

A central theme is that **schools are a universal safeguarding partner**, but cannot meet children's needs in isolation. The document places strong emphasis on **multi-agency working, early help, shared accountability and information-sharing**.

3. Key proposals of relevance to safeguarding

3.1 Early identification and early help

The White Paper repeatedly highlights that vulnerability often emerges **before statutory thresholds are met**, and that delayed support leads to escalation of need.

Key proposals include:

- strengthening early years and family support through Best Start Family Hubs;
- earlier identification of SEND and emerging needs;
- better use of attendance, behaviour and engagement data as early indicators of vulnerability.
- services being designed to intervene **before harm escalates**.

Safeguarding relevance:

This reinforces the safeguarding principle that **early help is a protective factor**. Poor attendance, disengagement, unmet SEND and family stress are explicitly recognised as safeguarding risks, not solely education issues.

3.2 Children missing education, attendance and engagement

The White Paper identifies persistent absence, severe absence and disengagement from school as major national risks, closely linked to exploitation, neglect, mental ill-health and criminalisation.

Key proposals include:

- renewed national focus on attendance as a shared responsibility;
- improved data-sharing between schools, local authorities and partners;
- stronger oversight of pupil movement, including off-rolling and alternative provision;
- recognition that children missing education are at heightened safeguarding risk.

Safeguarding relevance:

This aligns directly with safeguarding duties around **children missing education (CME)** and reinforces the role of safeguarding partnerships in assurance, challenge and system oversight.

3.3 Inclusion, SEND and vulnerability

The White Paper places SEND reform at the centre of system change, recognising that unmet need is a significant driver of exclusion, poor attendance and safeguarding risk.

Key proposals include:

- a stronger inclusive mainstream offer;
- earlier identification and evidence-based support;
- clearer shared responsibility across education, health and local authorities;
- reducing reliance on crisis-driven statutory processes.

Safeguarding relevance:

Children with SEND are consistently over-represented in safeguarding systems. The White Paper reinforces that **exclusion and unmet need are safeguarding issues**, requiring coordinated multi-agency responses.

3.4 Multi-agency working and shared accountability

The White Paper consistently stresses that **no single agency can deliver outcomes for children alone**. It promotes clearer roles, shared accountability and stronger local partnerships.

Key themes include:

- education as a core safeguarding partner;
- improved information-sharing between services;
- place-based approaches to improving outcomes;
- collective responsibility for children's safety and wellbeing.

Safeguarding relevance:

This directly mirrors the expectations set out in *Working Together to Safeguard Children*, reinforcing the role of safeguarding partnerships as the forum for **strategic coordination, challenge and assurance**.

4. Relevance to safeguarding partner agencies

4.1 Education settings and school trusts

Schools are positioned as:

- early identifiers of vulnerability;
- anchor institutions within communities;
- key contributors to safeguarding intelligence.

Implications include:

- stronger expectations around information-sharing;
- clearer links between attendance, behaviour and safeguarding;
- greater accountability for inclusion and pupil movement.

4.2 Local authority children's services

For children's social care and early help services, the White Paper reinforces:

- the importance of early, non-statutory intervention;
- alignment between education data and safeguarding thresholds;
- shared responsibility for children on the edge of statutory intervention.

This supports a system approach rather than reliance on crisis-driven responses.

4.3 Health partners

Health services are positioned as integral to:

- early identification of need;
- supporting children with SEND;
- addressing mental health, speech and language, and developmental needs.

The proposals support closer alignment between education, health and safeguarding systems.

4.4 Police and community safety partners

The White Paper recognises the links between:

- disengagement from education;
- vulnerability to exploitation and criminality;
- serious violence and contextual safeguarding risks.

This reinforces the importance of joint working around **prevention, early identification and disruption of harm**.

4.5 Voluntary and community sector

The document acknowledges the role of community-based services in:

- supporting engagement;
- building trusted relationships with families;
- delivering early, preventative support.

Safeguarding partnerships are encouraged to recognise and integrate this contribution.

5. Implications for the Newcastle Safeguarding Children Partnership

For NSCP, *Every Child Achieving and Thriving* provides important **national context** that supports and strengthens existing safeguarding priorities.

Key implications include:

5.1 Reinforcing early help as safeguarding

The White Paper supports continued focus on early help as a core safeguarding function, not an optional add-on.

5.2 Strengthening the education–safeguarding interface

Education's role as a safeguarding partner is clearly reinforced, supporting closer alignment between school systems and safeguarding arrangements.

5.3 Children missing education and attendance

The national emphasis on attendance and engagement strengthens the case for robust local CME arrangements, shared data and partnership oversight.

5.4 SEND and inclusion

The proposals support safeguarding assurance activity focused on children with SEND, exclusions, alternative provision and transitions.

5.5 Shared accountability and system leadership

The White Paper aligns with NSCP's role in:

- providing system leadership;
- holding partners to account;
- ensuring learning from safeguarding practice informs wider system improvement.

6. Key messages for partners

- **Safeguarding, inclusion, attendance and wellbeing are inseparable.**
- **Early help is central to safeguarding, not separate from it.**
- **Children missing education or excluded from school are at heightened risk of harm.**
- **Multi-agency working and information-sharing are essential, not optional.**
- **Safeguarding partnerships have a critical role in system assurance and leadership.**

7. Conclusion

Every Child Achieving and Thriving reinforces a message long recognised within safeguarding: **children are safest when systems work together early, inclusively and consistently.**

For safeguarding partners in Newcastle, the White Paper strengthens the policy framework that underpins partnership working and provides national support for continued focus on early help, inclusion, engagement and shared responsibility for children's safety and wellbeing.