

Briefing Paper: Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026

Newcastle Safeguarding Children Partnership (NSCP)

Date: 1st May 2026

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

Purpose of this briefing

The [Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026](#) became legislation following Royal Assent 29th April 2026. This briefing is intended to provide safeguarding partners with a clear, shared understanding of the act and its implications for multi-agency safeguarding responsibilities across children's social care, education, health, policing and the voluntary sector.

Context and Rationale

The Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026 is a wide-ranging reform designed to strengthen how organisations work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. It brings together changes across children's social care, safeguarding, education and information-sharing, responding to long-standing concerns about children falling between services and agencies not having a clear line of responsibility.

The Act builds on reforms set out in the [Independent Review of Children's Social Care](#) and aligns with updated statutory guidance, including [Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026](#).

What This Means in Practice

For safeguarding partnerships and relevant agencies, the Act introduces several significant statutory changes, including::

- **Statutory multi-agency child protection teams** in every local authority area, bringing social care, police, health and education together to work jointly on child protection cases.
- **Free Breakfast Clubs:** Every state-funded primary school in England is required to provide a free breakfast club for at least 30 minutes before the school day begins.
- **Clearer legal footing for information sharing**, without consent where necessary.
- **School Admissions:** Local authorities have the power to direct academies to admit specific children, such as those in care or with high needs, and can propose opening new maintained schools.
- **A single unique identifier for children**, intended to support more reliable information-sharing across services and reduce the risk of fragmented records. Further regulations will set out how this will be implemented.

- **A strengthened role for education in safeguarding**, including closer involvement in child protection activity and oversight of children not in school through a compulsory Children Not in School (CNIS) Register.
- **Enhanced protections for children in care and care leavers**, including stronger duties around kinship care, sibling relationships and continued support as young people transition to adulthood up to age 25 to help them find and maintain stable accommodation
- **Family Help duty placed on local authorities** to offer Family Group Decision Making meetings to keep families together and avoid children entering the care system where possible.
- **Illegal Schools**: Ofsted has been granted stronger powers to investigate and shut down unregistered or "illegal" schools that operate in unsafe conditions or provide inadequate education.
- **New powers to cap the profits of private children's social care providers** and introduce stricter regulations for agency social workers.

Key Messages for Partners

- Safeguarding is reinforced as a **shared and active responsibility** across all agencies, not the role of children's social care alone.
- **Early information-sharing and joint decision-making** are central expectations of the new framework..
- Education, health, police and VCSE partners have a **more explicit role in child protection decision-making** through multi-agency arrangements.
- The Act places renewed emphasis on **early identification, family networks and joined-up responses** to reduce crisis intervention later.

What Partners Need to Do Now

All safeguarding partners should:

- **Re-affirm safeguarding as a shared responsibility within their organisation**, including leadership oversight and challenge.
- **Review information-sharing practice**, ensuring staff are confident to share concerns promptly where a child's safety or welfare may be affected.
- **Check alignment with Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026**, including roles in early help, child protection and multi-agency working.
- **Engage with NSCP briefings and communications** as further national guidance and local implementation arrangements are confirmed.
- **Maintain focus on children's lived experience**, particularly where multiple agencies are involved or risk is escalating.

Engagement and Next Steps

- Further statutory guidance and secondary legislation will set out implementation detail.
- Local arrangements, policies and assurance processes will be reviewed through NSCP.
- Partners will receive updates as national expectations and local timelines are clarified.