

Briefing Paper: Crime and Policing 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 [Crime and Policing Act 2026](#) became legislation following Royal Assent 29th April 2026. This briefing is intended to provide safeguarding partners with a concise overview of the Act and the key implications for multi-agency work to protect children, young people and communities across Newcastle..

Context and Rationale

The Crime and Policing Act 2026 introduces wide-ranging reforms to strengthen the response to serious violence, violence against women and girls, antisocial behaviour and criminal exploitation, alongside new powers and duties for the police and criminal justice system..

The Act supports the Government's [Safer Streets Mission](#), with a strong focus on prevention, early intervention and protecting vulnerable people from harm. Several provisions are directly relevant to safeguarding partnerships, particularly where children and young people are affected by violence, exploitation or coercion.

What This Means in Practice

The Act strengthens the statutory framework affecting safeguarding through measures including:

- **New and strengthened offences linked to child criminal exploitation**, enabling earlier intervention and clearer accountability where children are coerced or exploited into criminal activity.
- **Expanded mandatory reporting and safeguarding-related duties** linked to child sexual abuse and exploitation, reinforcing expectations on professionals and organisations to act and report concerns.
- **Enhanced police and court powers** to disrupt serious violence, stalking, antisocial behaviour and exploitation, including the use of civil and criminal orders where individuals pose ongoing risk.
- **Stronger measures to tackle violence against women and girls**, online harm, and sexually exploitative behaviour, with safeguards that are particularly relevant for adolescents. [tyla.com],

These changes sit alongside, and do not replace, existing safeguarding duties under the [Children Acts](#) and [Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026](#).

Key Messages for Partners

- The Act reinforces the importance of **multi-agency working to prevent harm**, particularly where crime, exploitation and safeguarding intersect.
- **Criminal exploitation of children is treated explicitly as abuse**, requiring safeguarding responses alongside criminal justice action.
- Partners have a clear role in **early identification, information-sharing and disruption of risk**, working with policing and other agencies.
- The focus remains on **protecting victims, preventing escalation and reducing repeat harm**.

In Newcastle, the Act strongly aligns with existing NSCP priorities, including:

- Responding to [risk and harm outside the home](#), particularly serious violence, exploitation and peer-related abuse.
- Strengthening partnership responses to **child criminal exploitation and contextual safeguarding**, where policing and safeguarding responsibilities overlap.
- Supporting local work on **violence reduction, adolescent safeguarding and multi-agency disruption activity**, ensuring children are seen first and foremost as victims where exploitation is present.

Implementation will be taken forward through existing safeguarding and community safety governance arrangements, working closely with Northumbria Police and other partners.

What Partners Need to Do Now

All safeguarding partners should:

- **Re-affirm that child criminal exploitation is abuse**, requiring a safeguarding response alongside enforcement activity.
- **Review information-sharing practice**, ensuring concerns about violence, exploitation or coercion are shared promptly and lawfully..
- **Ensure staff understand [new safeguarding-relevant offences and duties](#)**, particularly those linked to reporting and exploitation.
- **Strengthen joint working with policing**, especially in relation to adolescents, serious violence and risk outside the home.
- **Maintain focus on children's lived experience**, avoiding criminalisation of exploited children and prioritising protection.

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.

Crime and Policing Act 2026

Safeguarding-Relevant New Offences and Duties

1. Standalone offence of Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)

What's new

- The Act creates a **specific criminal offence of child criminal exploitation**, making it explicit in primary legislation that exploiting a child into criminal activity is a serious offence in its own right.
- This removes ambiguity about whether exploitation must be proved through linked offences (e.g. drugs or violence) and enables **earlier, clearer intervention**.

Safeguarding relevance

- Reinforces that **children involved in criminal activity may be victims of abuse**, not offenders.
- Requires safeguarding partners to respond through **child protection, contextual safeguarding and exploitation pathways**, alongside criminal justice action.

2. Mandatory reporting duty linked to child sexual abuse

What's new / strengthened

- The Act introduces a **mandatory duty on specified professionals** to report child sexual abuse when they become aware of it, alongside:
 - A **new criminal offence of deliberately preventing or hindering a report** of child sexual abuse.

Safeguarding relevance

- Creates a **clear legal threshold** for action, removing discretion not to report.
- Makes senior leaders and organisations accountable for **cultures or practices that obstruct reporting**.
- Has direct implications for safeguarding policies, escalation routes and professional challenge.

3. New offence of attempting to conceal or obstruct reporting of child sexual abuse

What's new

- The Act criminalises **wilfully concealing or attempting to conceal child sexual abuse**, including actions taken to silence victims or discourage professionals from reporting.

Safeguarding relevance

- Reinforces expectations around **professional curiosity, escalation and whistle-blowing**.
- Relevant for organisations working with adolescents, faith settings, voluntary sector and institutional contexts.

4. New offence of “cuckooing” linked to exploitation

What's new

- A new criminal offence of **cuckooing** (taking over a person's home through coercion or exploitation for criminal activity).

Safeguarding relevance

- Highly relevant to **adolescents affected by exploitation**, county lines and organised crime.
- Supports safeguarding responses where children are exposed to serious harm through criminal networks operating in domestic settings.

5. Expanded offences and powers linked to serious violence and weapons

What's new / strengthened

- New offence of **possession of a knife or bladed article with intent to cause unlawful violence**.
- Stronger offences and penalties linked to the supply and online sale of weapons.

Safeguarding relevance

- Directly affects **risk outside the home**, peer violence and adolescent safeguarding.
- Reinforces the need for **multi-agency risk assessment**, not just enforcement responses.

6. Safeguarding-relevant offences targeting online and sexual harm

What's new

- New criminal offences relating to:
 - Harmful and exploitative sexual content (including content depicting adults role-playing as children).
 - Intimate image abuse and spiking offences.

Safeguarding relevance

- Particularly relevant for **teenage relationship abuse**, online exploitation and gender-based violence.
- Requires safeguarding partners to align responses with **online harm, VAWG and exploitation pathways**.

What this means for safeguarding partners

When we say:

“Ensure staff understand new safeguarding-relevant offences and duties, particularly those linked to reporting and exploitation”

we mean ensuring staff understand that:

- **Exploiting a child into crime is now a specific criminal offence**, not just an enforcement issue.
- **Certain professionals now have a legal duty to report child sexual abuse**, not a discretionary one.
- **Preventing or discouraging reporting is itself a criminal offence**.
- Police powers can and should be used **alongside safeguarding responses**, not instead of them.
- Children drawn into violence or criminality must be treated as **children first**, with protection and support.