



The Rt Hon Baroness Jacqui Smith

Minister for Skills

Department for Education Sanctuary Buildings 20 Great Smith Street London SW1P 3BT

tel: 0370 000 2288 www.education.gov.uk/contactus/dfe

The Baroness Barran MBE
House of Lords
London
SW1A 0PW

Wednesday 28th May 2025

Dear Diana,

I'd like to thank you for the interesting debate on Clause 2 of the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill to strengthen the role of education and childcare settings in multi-agency safeguarding arrangements.

I committed to write to the House with some examples of how strengthening the role of education in multi-agency safeguarding arrangements will work in practice.

Duties for safeguarding partners set out in the Children Act 2004 mean that safeguarding partners:

- Have authority to make decisions on behalf of all settings
- Must be able commit funding to the safeguarding partnership on behalf of all settings, and
- Must be able to represent the views of all settings when making decisions

There, presently, is no single voice that could represent education and childcare settings at this level, or who would have the appropriate authority and accountability to make decisions and commit funding on behalf of all settings.

Currently, it is at the discretion of the safeguarding partners to identify and name relevant agencies within their local area in published arrangements, but we know that education and childcare are not consistently included or represented. This is why we have introduced Clause 2 into the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill, which places duties on safeguarding partners to **automatically** include all education and childcare settings in their arrangements, as well as work together with these agencies to make these arrangements.

This legislation will apply to all education and childcare settings as set out in the [Child Safeguarding Practice Review and Relevant Agency \(England\) Regulations 2018](#), which includes special schools, alternative provision, academies, further education settings and colleges and early years and childcare settings, amongst others.

Safeguarding partners will have to adapt their existing safeguarding arrangement structures to ensure that the breadth of education and childcare settings are included, engaged and represented at all levels. When doing this, they will need to balance the need for a consistent inclusion of education in safeguarding arrangements while being operationally deliverable for safeguarding partners as well as education and childcare settings.

Local areas have received £500m for the year 2025-26 to support safeguarding partners and their relevant agencies to rollout family help and child protection reforms, which includes funding for strengthening the role of education in multi-agency safeguarding arrangements. This will help ensure that local areas are well prepared to deliver this legislation when it comes into effect.

The majority of local areas already have structures in place to include education and childcare settings in their arrangements, which can be adapted to comply with the new legislation. In March 2025, [we published analysis into the Yearly Reports from 2023-2024](#). 92% of local children's safeguarding partnerships yearly reports were analysed. This annual reporting gives a good understanding of where safeguarding partners are delivering adequate representation and input from education and childcare settings.

Through engagement with early years providers and representative organisations, we know that it is often these settings who are overlooked or not engaged in safeguarding arrangements. Stakeholders from colleges and further education settings have expressed frustration with not being heard at the strategic level of partnerships and are concerned that the unique safeguarding contexts for young people is not represented. This not only creates issues in operational safeguarding, it means the experiences and voice of these settings are not able to influence the decisions about how safeguarding is carried out in the local area.

The Families First for Children (FFC) pathfinder areas have been mapping these settings locally and adjusting their communication based on their contexts and needs. Safeguarding partnerships have established clear routes of communication for settings so that they can express views and ask questions. For example, one local area has created a sub-group for early years settings that has a clear route into the wider partnership. They have made the meetings virtual to assist with attendance.

There are many other ways that areas have already adapted their arrangements to ensure local education and childcare settings are represented at the strategic level of multi-agency safeguarding arrangements. The precise approach varies depending on local context but in the vast majority there will be at least one group or forum for education and childcare settings that feed into wider structures of the partnership including executive leadership boards where key decisions are made. The chairs of these education and childcare sub-groups in some areas is chosen to represent these sectors at executive boards.

The ten FFC pathfinder local areas have been testing a strengthened role for education, including working specifically on the question of representation at the strategic level of partnerships. Different models operationalising this include:

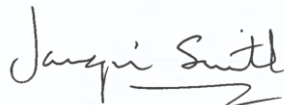
- use of a chair or rotating chair positions for the education sub-groups, who attend the strategic boards
- roles within the partnership such as the appointment of a “strategic education leads” who coordinate the inclusion and representation of education at the strategic level and agree terms of reference in how their views are represented at executive boards.

Through these models, education and childcare settings have reported that they feel like an ‘equal partner’, ensuring that information and their views are not only fed into the lead safeguarding partner level of arrangements, but information and support is communicated back to settings, improving multi-agency working.

Through the implementation of this legislation, we will work closely with local areas including education and childcare settings, to share good practice, learning and update statutory guidance so that safeguarding partners and education and childcare settings can agree the best model for their local context.

Thank you again for taking the time to engage on these matters. I hope these further details have been useful and I will place a copy in the House libraries

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Jacqui Smith". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line under the name.

The Rt Hon Baroness Jacqui Smith

Minister for Skills