

This document contains a breakdown of each part of the [knowledge and skills statement for child and family practitioners](#) with links to different types of learning resources on CC Inform that can help you develop and evidence your knowledge and skills in that area. This is just a selection of material on the site; use the search function and knowledge and practice hub pages on specific topics to explore further.

1. Relationships and direct work

What does the statement say?

A child and family social worker should be able to:

- *Build effective relationships with children, young people and families and ensure they receive the support to which they are entitled.*
- *Be both authoritative and empathic and work in partnership with children, families and professionals.*
- *Enable full participation by children, families and other professionals in assessment, planning, review and decision making.*
- *Ensure child protection is always the first priority.*
- *Provide support based on best evidence, and tailored to meet both individual child and family needs as well as relevant significant risks.*
- *Secure access to services and negotiate and challenge other professionals/organisations to provide the help required.*
- *Provide support for transitions e.g. children and young people moving to and between placements, returning home, adoption or moving to independence.*
- *Help children separate from, and sustain, multiple relationships, recognising the impact of loss and change.*

Resources to help you

The [direct work knowledge and practice hub](#) includes a range of resources and tools to help you build effective relationships including:

- a [directory of tools](#), with reviews from social workers who have used them in practice
- a [group CPD activity](#) focusing on developing ideas and skills for direct work with older children and teenagers
- a [guide to confident direct work with children](#), which explains the principles behind direct work, and provides tips, practice examples and videos of giving children a voice and building trusting relationships
- case studies and reflection on [adapting direct work tools for use with disabled children](#)

[How to develop social work care plans](#) takes a collaborative approach to developing plans in partnership with families, using SMART and POWER principles.

[Relationship-based practice scenario videos](#) show examples of common social work conversations (talking to a parent about alcohol abuse, a young person about 'contact', a victim and perpetrator of domestic abuse) with commentary on how relationships are built, whilst keeping the child's safety and wellbeing in mind. They consider the use of empathy, authority and meaningful participation.

Looked-after and adopted children

[Life story work](#) covers how to use life story work to help adopted children explore and understand their early history and life before adoption.

[Transitions, beginnings and endings](#) provides suggestions to support children in foster care through change.

[Staying Put arrangements](#) covers good practice to support young people and carers.

2. Communication

What does the statement say?

A child and family social worker should be able to:

- *Communicate clearly and sensitively with children of different ages and abilities (and their families) in a range of settings and circumstances, using methods based on best evidence.*
- *Create immediate rapport to facilitate engagement and motivation to participate in child protection enquiries, assessments and services.*
- *Act respectfully even when people are angry, hostile and resistant to change.*
- *Manage tensions between parents, carers and family members - show persistence, determination and professional confidence.*
- *Listen to the views, wishes and feelings of children and families.*
- *Help parents and carers understand how children communicate through their behaviour and how they might communicate more effectively with their children.*
- *Promote speech, language and communication support, identifying children and adults who are experiencing difficulties expressing themselves.*
- *Case notes and reports should be focused and jargon free. Present a clear analysis and sound rationale for actions and conclusions so that all parties are well informed.*

Resources to help you

[Child development practice support tool](#) summarises typical development stages from birth to 16, including communication and speech and language development.

[Attachment theory: applying it in your practice](#) includes how to use the idea of mind-mindedness or mentalising capacity to help parents and carers understand and communicate more effectively with children.

[‘Disguised compliance’](#) explores how to take a relationship-based approach when families appear ‘resistant to change’.

[Working with hostile and aggressive clients](#) gives advice on risk assessing situations and ensuring personal safety, reducing the potential for violence and dealing with emotional repercussions.

[Learn on the go podcast: parental alienation](#) discusses this specific tension between family members and what social workers can do.

[Voice of the disabled child](#) sets out the qualities practitioners need to develop in order to gather the opinions and preferences of disabled children and young people and offers tools you can use with any child you are working with.

[One page profiles](#) explains this technique for building rapport, learning how best to communicate with a child and conveying a flavour of their personality, strengths and aspirations

[Family group conferences](#) explains this model of involving the wider family group in decision-making and planning and how to use conferences effectively.

[Audio - using attachment theory to support families](#) explores how to give parents the experience of being understood and show that you will treat them with empathy, and capture what they are feeling without necessarily agreeing with that they are saying. Provides suggestions for how to open a visit and start from a position of civility where resistance about concerns you need to discuss is less likely.

[Case recording](#) includes how to write clear, jargon-free, accurate records that can reliably be used for decision making and court work and read by service users.

3. Child development

What does the statement say?

A child and family social worker should be able to:

- *Observe and talk to children in their environment (including at home, school, with friends and peers) to help understand their physical and emotional world. This includes the quality of child and parent/carer interaction and other key relationships.*
- *Understand typical age-related physical, cognitive, social, emotional and behavioural development over time, accepting that development is different for each child due to health, environmental and genetic factors.*
- *Establish the pattern of development for the child, promote optimal child development and be alert to signs that may indicate they are not meeting key developmental milestones, have been harmed or are at risk of harm.*
- *Assess the influence of cultural and social factors on child development, the effect of different parenting styles, and of loss, change and uncertainty in the development of resilience.*
- *Explore whether behavioural and emotional development may also be a result of communication difficulties, ill health or disability - adjusting practice accordingly.*
- *Seek further advice from relevant professionals to fully understand a child's development and behaviour.*

Resources to help you

[Child development practice support tool](#) shows typical development stages and processes from birth to 16 years. You can print off a summary of the key physical, communication, cognition and social, emotional and mental health stages for each age group.

Guides to the impact of neglect

In-depth guides to how neglect affects development in [prenatal](#), [0-2](#), [2-4](#), [primary school age](#) and [adolescent](#) children and young people to help you understand the risk of harm.

[Attachment – understanding the theory](#) and other resources in the [attachment knowledge and practice hub](#) help you understand how parents provide a 'safe haven', 'secure base' and 'mentalise' about their children and how this influences development.

[Cultural competence](#) provides tips and models for working effectively in different cultural contexts and maximising sensitivity when working in diverse communities. See also:

- [Working with gypsy and traveller communities](#) and [east European Roma families](#)
- [Country profiles: culture and customs among migrant groups](#)
- [Learn on the go podcast: social work with transgender people](#)

The [working with disabled children knowledge and practice hub](#) helps practitioners keep in mind how practice should be adjusted if children are developing differently because of a disability. It includes:

- [guidance on communicating with children with different disabilities](#)
- [the complexities of identifying and acting on safeguarding concerns if children have impairments](#)

4. Adult mental & physical health, substance use, domestic abuse

What does the statement say?

A child and family social worker should be able to:

- *Identify the impact of adult mental ill health, substance misuse, domestic abuse, physical ill health and disability on family functioning on children, including those who are young carers.*
- *Access help from other professionals to identify and prevent adult social need and risk, including mental health and learning disability assessments.*
- *Coordinate emergency and routine services and synthesise multi-disciplinary judgements as part of ongoing social work assessment.*
- *Use a range of strategies to help families facing these difficulties.*
- *Identify concerning adult behaviours that may indicate risk or increasing risk to children. Assess the likely impact on, and inter-relationship between, parenting and child development.*
- *Recognise and act upon escalating social needs and risks, helping to ensure that vulnerable adults are safeguarded and that a child is protected and their best interests always prioritised.*

Resources to help you

[Working with domestic abuse, substance use and mental ill health](#) explores the impact on children and parenting in families where these difficulties co-occur (sometimes referred to as “the toxic trio”), and how to support and engage children and adults.

[Domestic abuse knowledge and practice hub](#) includes guides, quick guides, lessons from research and CPD sessions including:

- [When and how to involve police](#)
- [MARACs and MAPPAs](#)
- [Assessing emotional harm to children](#)
- [Working with perpetrators](#)
- [Financial support for victims](#)

[Adults who use alcohol and other drugs: lessons from research](#) and [How parental substance misuse affects children: lessons from research](#) provide key points for effective practice and interventions in families where substance or alcohol use is a problem.

Practice scenario videos of a [social worker talking to a parent about alcohol misuse, with a victim of domestic abuse](#) and [a perpetrator](#) with commentary and reflection questions look at different strategies for helping families facing these difficulties.

[Mental health problems directory](#) provides an alphabetical list of conditions with a summary of the condition, the causes and symptoms and how it is diagnosed and treated (see also the [medical conditions A-Z](#)).

[Working with parents with learning disabilities](#) summarises the legislation and guidance in this area, and uses case studies to discuss the social worker's role.

[Supporting parents who have physical impairments](#) explains key issues, legislation and guidance in this area, and includes service users' perspectives.

5. Abuse and neglect of children

What does the statement say?

A child and family social worker should be able to:

- *Exchange information with partner agencies where there is concern about safety and welfare and analyse evidence from all agencies to ensure robust conclusions are drawn.*
- *Recognise harm and the risk indicators of sexual, physical, emotional abuse and neglect.*
- *Take into account the long-term effects of cumulative harm, particularly in relation to early indicators of neglect.*
- *Consider the possibility of child sexual exploitation, grooming (on and offline), female genital mutilation and enforced marriage and the range of adult behaviours which pose a risk to children, recognising too that children may be perpetrators of abuse.*
- *Lead the investigation of allegations of significant harm in consultation with other professionals and practice supervisors.*
- *Draw own conclusions about the likelihood of, for example, sexual abuse or non-accidental injury having occurred and the extent to which any injury is consistent with the explanation offered. Commission a second professional opinion and take legal advice where necessary.*

Resources to help you

[Neglect knowledge and practice hub](#) provides a wide range of resources to help you apply theory and research to practice dilemmas. Includes:

- [Top tips for spotting the signs of neglect](#)
- [The impact of neglect at different ages](#)
- [Neglect cases: a model for concurrent interventions](#)
- [Learn as a group: understand what neglect felt and looked like for Jenny Molloy](#)

[Child sexual abuse knowledge and practice hub](#) includes [risk factors, signs and indicators](#), [working with partner agencies](#), [supporting children to speak about abuse](#) with case studies and survivor perspectives throughout.

[CSE knowledge and practice hub](#)

Resources include:

- [Signs and indicators of child sexual exploitation: quick guide](#)
- [Using a trauma model to work with victims](#)
- [Understanding the role of the criminal justice system and research on perpetration](#)

[FGM knowledge and practice hub](#) includes both the social work and health perspectives and a podcast with messages from research.

[Attachment knowledge and practice hub](#) includes quick guides, tools and case studies to help you understand the links between maltreatment and attachment behaviours.

[Child protection conferences](#) provides an overview of the process following a section 47 investigation with good practice pointers.

[Working Together guidance: how it affects your social work role](#) summarises and explains how the key statutory safeguarding guidance operates.

6. Child and family assessment

What does the statement say?

A child and family social worker should be able to:

- *Carry out in-depth and ongoing assessment of social need and risk to children, with emphasis on parental capacity and capability to change.*
- *Use professional curiosity and authority while maintaining a position of partnership, involving the family members, including fathers.*
- *Acknowledge any conflict between parental and children's interests, prioritising the protection of children.*
- *Use child observation skills, genograms, ecomaps, chronologies and other evidence-based tools ensuring active family participation.*
- *Incorporate contributions from other professional disciplines.*
- *Hold an empathic position about difficult social circumstances, the relationship between poverty and social deprivation, and the effect of stress on family functioning, providing help and support.*
- *Take into account how individual histories might affect the ability of adults and children to engage with services.*
- *Recognise and address behaviour that may indicate resistance to change, ambivalent or selective cooperation with services, and recognise when there is a need for immediate action, and what other steps can be taken to protect children.*

Resources to help you

[Writing chronologies](#) explores how to use chronologies as a key tool in assessment and analysis, putting people first rather than seeing them as an administrative chore.

[How to apply systemic practice in your work](#) includes the use of ecomaps and genograms with case studies to help you think about how you assess and support families.

[Guide to risk assessment of child neglect](#) sets out a framework to help practitioners better identify and assess neglect.

[Assessing attachment quick guide](#) explains how to use attachment-related knowledge and tools to understand the dynamics of parent-child interaction.

[Working with fathers in child protection: lessons from research](#) explores the potential barriers in work with fathers, and how to overcome these.

[Learn on the go: poverty, child protection and the care system](#) discusses research into poverty and deprivation and how this links locally to the proportion of children in care and on child protection plans.

[Working with resistant parents: lessons from research](#) looks at different forms of resistance and identifies messages from research to help practitioners recognise risks and challenge parents when necessary.

[Rethinking 'disguised compliance'](#) critically considers the use of this term in practice and suggests relationship-based approaches to working with families who are resistant to change and cooperate selectively with services.

7. Analysis, decision-making, planning and review

What does the statement say?

A child and family social worker should be able to:

- *Establish the seriousness of different risks and any harm already suffered by a child, balanced with family strengths and potential solutions.*
- *Set out the best options for resolving difficulties considering the risk of future harm and the likelihood of successful change*
- *Prioritise children's need for emotional warmth, stability and sense of belonging, particularly those in public care, as well as identity development, health and education.*
- *Test multiple hypotheses using evidence and professional judgement to reach timely conclusions.*
- *Challenge any prevailing professional conclusions in the light of new evidence or practice reflection.*
- *Make realistic, child-centred plans within a review timeline, to manage and reduce identified risks and meet their needs.*
- *Ensure sufficient multi-disciplinary input into the process at all stages.*
- *Use twin and triple track planning to minimise chances of drift or delay, and monitor effectiveness of support plans.*

Resources to help you

[Managing risk](#) considers what practitioners and managers understand by 'risk' and how to take a balanced, proportionate approach to managing concerns.

[Strengths-based practice with families](#): this hub brings together information and guidance on approaches such as motivational interviewing, solution-focused practice, systemic practice, signs of safety, along with video and audio examples of approaches in action.

[Guide to analysis and decision-making](#) explains how to use a model of continual hypothesising and information gathering to ensure analysis and professional judgement underpins all your assessments and decision-making. (See also the [learn as a group session on this topic](#).)

[How to develop social work care plans](#) incorporates statutory guidance and research on what works in care planning, with case studies and exercises to help you implement child-centred 'SMART' (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Timely) and 'POWER' (Positive, Own role, What specifically, Evidence and Relationship) approaches in your own practice. (See also the [learn as a group session on this topic](#).)

[Evidence-based practice](#) explores how to use evidence to inform your practice and ways to find relevant information and stay up-to-date.

[Concurrent planning](#) describes an approach where foster carers are recruited with a view to potentially becoming adopters for children when there is a high risk they will be unable to safely return to their birth parents.

8. The law and the family and youth justice systems

What does the statement say?

A child and family social worker should be able to:

- *Navigate the family and youth justice systems to support families, to protect children and look after children in the public care system, including the regulatory frameworks that support the full range of permanence options.*
- *Participate in decisions about whether to apply to the family court, the order to be applied for, and the preparation and presentation of evidence.*
- *Seek advice and second opinion as required in relation to legal issues such as immigration, housing, welfare benefits, mental health and learning disability assessment, education and support for children with learning difficulties.*
- *Use the law, regulatory and statutory guidance to inform practice decisions.*
- *Take into account the complex relationship between professional ethics, the application of the law and the impact of social policy on both.*

Resources to help you

The [court skills knowledge and practice hub](#) includes a wide range of legal and practical information including:

- [A barrister's tips for giving evidence in the family courts](#), which gives tips on dealing with challenges in cross examination
- [A judge's view of what they expect from good social work witnesses](#)
- Writing [effective court reports](#) and [balance sheet evidence](#) for different permanence options, plus [how to write up direct work](#)
- Practical tips and answers to common concerns in the [appearing in court survival guide](#)
- [Learn as a group: using research in court work](#)

CC Inform also provides accessible digests of the legislation that affects your practice, for example: [The Children Act 1989](#), [The Adoption and Children Act 2002](#), [Children and Families Act 2014](#), [The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review \(England\) Regulations 2010 \(as amended\) \(Statutory Instrument 2010/959\)](#)

You can also search the site using the title of any Act or set of regulations you are interested in.

Guidance on specific legal issues

- [Section 20 placements](#)
- [Deprivation of liberty](#)
- [Asylum age assessment](#)
- [Supporting and protecting disabled children](#)
- [Immigration Act 2016](#)
- [The Mental Capacity Act in relation to children and young people](#)
- [Child trafficking: legislation, policy, guidance and multi-agency working](#)
- [Guides to different aspects of housing and homelessness](#)
- [A-Z of welfare benefits](#)
- [Families with no recourse to public funds](#)
- [Radicalisation case law summaries](#)
- [Child sexual exploitation case law summaries](#)

[Social work and the Prevent duty](#) takes an example of an issue where professional ethics, the law and social policy may conflict and suggests how to approach five example practice dilemmas.

[Writing court reports](#) considers the ethical dimensions around how society defines child abuse, neglect and maltreatment and the power social workers have when gathering and presenting evidence.

9. The role of supervision

What does the statement say?

A child and family social worker should be able to:

- *Recognise how and when to seek advice from practice supervisors, senior practice leaders and practitioners from, for example, psychiatry, paediatrics and psychology.*
- *Discuss, debate, reflect upon and test hypotheses about what is happening within families, and with children.*
- *Explore the potential for bias in decision-making and resolve tensions emerging from, for example, ethical dilemmas, conflicting information or differing professional positions.*
- *Identify which methods will be of help for a specific child or family and the limitations of different approaches.*
- *Make use of the best evidence from research to inform judgements and decisions.*
- *Reflect on the emotional experience of the work and identify where personal triggers are affecting the quality of analysis or help.*
- *Identify strategies to build professional resilience and management of self.*

Resources to help you

[Analysis and decision-making](#) looks at how you can develop a robust decision-making process, based on continually testing and refining hypotheses. It also helps you address common biases in thinking.

[Critical reflection: how to develop it in your practice](#) discusses different methods and models you can use to reflect on your practice, with tips for writing a piece of critical reflection.

[Evidence-based practice](#) explores how to use research evidence to inform your practice, find relevant information and take a critical approach to ensure it is used appropriately.

[Developing your emotional resilience](#) offers helpful techniques and ways to identify your own coping strategies for the demands of the role and adapt your thinking style when it comes to difficulties. You can also play back our [webinar](#) on this topic.

[Supervision knowledge and practice hub](#): Discussing the emotional impact of work can be difficult, depending on your organisation's culture. Find tips and also get the supervisor's perspective here.

[How attachments affect your own practice](#) helps you consider how your own attachment organisation in childhood may affect the way you deal with situations that come up in your work.

10. Organisational context

What does the statement say?

A child and family social worker should be able to:

- *Operate successfully in a wide range of organisational contexts, complying with the checks and balances within local and national systems.*
- *Maintain effective working relationships with peers, managers and leaders, within the profession, multi-agency partnerships and public bodies.*
- *Act in ways that protect the reputation of the employer and the profession, whilst always privileging children's best interests.*
- *Manage the organisational tasks relating to lead responsibility for children with the support of an appropriately qualified supervisor and the multi-agency network.*
- *Contribute to the organisation's role as corporate parent to children in public care, encouraging and advocating for organisational focus, resource and support so that children and young people can thrive and enjoy their childhood and move into independence with confidence in and ambition for their futures.*

Resources to help you

Working together guidance

Working together to safeguard children is the key piece of statutory guidance on inter-agency working. See our [guide to the latest version](#) which sets out the role of different organisations.

Models of practice

These resources can help you think about practising in different organisational contexts:

- [Signs of safety: quick guide](#)
- [Solution-focused practice: quick guide](#)
- [Systemic practice](#)
- [Learn on the go: strengths-based practice – podcast](#)
- [Learn on the go: motivational interviewing - podcast](#)

Managing and organising the many tasks that comprise casework can be a challenge for all social workers. Our guide to [time management](#) offers tips on how to take control of your workload.

[Managing professional boundaries in social work](#)

provides tips on ensuring you maintain professional distance while working with people on sometimes very personal issues. It also covers how to make best use of management and support structures.

Information and guidance on the corporate parent role can be found in the [fostering knowledge and practice hub](#), [adoption knowledge and practice hub](#) and the forthcoming looked-after children hub.