



Levels of Intervention Gap Analysis Revised Document, Working Together 2026 Edition

Introduction

This document sets out the key changes between version 10 of the Levels of Intervention document, published in 2025, and version 11, published in 2026. The 2026 version has been strengthened to align with Working Together 2026 and the Family Help model; however, the changes are not substantial enough to require formal sign-off by the Partnership. The GSCP Business Unit therefore intends to relaunch the document through its usual mechanisms: sharing it with representatives across the Youth Justice Management Board, Child Death Overview Panel, Children's Coalition and Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership; announcing the change in the GSCP newsletter at the end of October; and promoting it through a banner on the GSCP website in mid to late October, aligned with the newsletter publication.

The key strategic shift is:

2025 document

- Primarily a traditional thresholds and intervention document.
- Focuses on helping practitioners identify levels of need and appropriate responses.
- Family Help is referenced but not embedded as the organising principle of the framework.

2026 document

- Repositions the whole framework around a Family Help system.
- Explicitly aligns to Working Together 2026.
- Emphasises seamless support, relationships, lived experience, family networks, contextual safeguarding and anti-discriminatory practice.
- Moves away from a threshold-counting approach toward professional judgement and multi-agency decision making.

Major Messaging Changes

1. Family Help becomes the central organising principle

This is the biggest change.

2025 document

Family Help is described as the umbrella under which Levels 3 and 4 services operate.

2026 document

The document explicitly states that:

- Levels 3 and 4 together represent Gloucestershire's Family Help system.
- Child in Need and Child Protection are delivered within Family Help.
- They should not be viewed as separate tiers.
- Families should experience continuity of relationships and support across Levels 3 and 4.

This is a significant conceptual change and mirrors the national Families First reforms.

2. Child-centred and lived-experience language is much stronger

New in 2026

The document introduces explicit practice principles:

- Child-centred practice
- Child's lived experience
- Whole-family approach
- Working with families
- Family networks
- Seamless system
- Professional curiosity and challenge
- Anti-discriminatory practice

These principles do not appear as a structured section in the 2025 version. They existed only as comments suggesting they should be added.

3. Greater emphasis on family networks

The 2026 document introduces:

- Family Group Decision Making
- Wider family networks
- Co-production of plans
- Family participation in decision making
- Explicit expectations around family involvement.

The 2025 published text contains none of this as substantive guidance. It only appears as proposed amendments within comments.

4. Stronger anti-discriminatory and equality focus

The 2026 document repeatedly references:

- Poverty
- Inequality
- Discrimination
- Structural inequalities
- Cultural context
- Disproportionality and bias
- Anti-discriminatory practice.

These themes are largely absent from the 2025 narrative.

This represents a substantial policy and practice shift.

5. Inclusion statement added

A completely new section in 2026 sets out that the framework applies to:

- Unborn babies
- Disabled children
- Kinship children
- Special Guardianship arrangements
- Children in custody
- Young carers
- Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children
- Children experiencing cumulative low-level harm.

There is no equivalent inclusion statement in the 2025 version.

6. Professional judgement is elevated above indicators

2025 document

The document states the indicators should guide decision making.

2026 document

The document repeatedly reinforces that:

- Indicators should inform decisions.
- Indicators should not determine decisions.
- Thresholds should not be based on counting indicators.
- Professional judgement is essential.
- Multi-agency discussion is essential.
- Child lived experience must inform decisions.

This message is much more prominent.

7. Earlier intervention becomes "Earliest Help"

2025 document

Level 2 is called "Early Help".

2026 document

Level 2 becomes "Earliest Help".

This is mainly terminology but reflects a stronger emphasis on intervening before concerns escalate.

8. New expectations for multi-agency working

The 2026 version adds a dedicated section setting expectations that practitioners should:

- Share responsibility.
- Work towards shared goals.
- Challenge professionally.
- Share information.
- Remain professionally curious.

This is far stronger than in the 2025 document.

9. Greater emphasis on contextual safeguarding

The 2026 version includes a dedicated section on:

Harm Outside the Home

Including:

- Exploitation
- Peer abuse
- Online harm
- Community harm
- Contextual safeguarding responses.

It also explicitly states that:

parental capacity alone may not mitigate risk.

While some extra-familial indicators existed previously, this strategic narrative is much more developed in 2026.

10. Domestic abuse messaging strengthened

The 2026 version adds a dedicated statement that:

- Children are victims of domestic abuse in their own right.
- Practitioners must consider coercive control.
- Emotional harm.
- Cumulative impact.

This is not present in the 2025 narrative.

11. Lead Practitioner role clarified

The 2026 version introduces a more explicit explanation of the Lead Practitioner role:

- Main point of contact.
- Builds relationship.
- Coordinates support.
- Leads assessment.
- Reviews plans.

This is largely absent from the main body of the 2025 version.

12. What Has Not Changed

The largest section of the document, the:

- Physical Health indicators
- Education indicators
- Social and Neighbourhood indicators
- Parenting indicators
- Family and Environment indicators
- Emotional Wellbeing indicators

are substantially unchanged between the versions. Most rows and thresholds remain identical or very close in wording.

The principal changes are therefore in:

- the introduction
- practice principles
- continuum narrative
- Family Help positioning
- contextual safeguarding
- anti-discriminatory practice
- decision-making guidance
- glossary additions.

13. In Summary

Looking purely at the messaging, the 2026 document is substantially stronger than the 2025 version as it:

- aligns clearly with Working Together 2026;
- reflects Families First reforms;
- encourages relational practice rather than threshold management;
- places lived experience and family networks at the centre;
- recognises contextual safeguarding and extra-familial harm more explicitly;
- addresses bias, inequality and discrimination more directly.

The biggest single message shift is from:

"Which level does this child fit into?"

towards

"How does the Family Help system respond to this child's lived experience through coordinated multi-agency support?"