

# Post-pandemic landscape provides 'once-only' chance to overhaul child safeguarding

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An urgent overhaul of the UK's safeguarding processes for vulnerable children is needed to future-proof the system in a post-pandemic climate and protect those most at-risk, says major report by King's researchers.

Following the national review into the deaths of Arthur Labinjo-Hughes and Star Hobson, and Independent Review of Children's Social Care, both published last year, new evidence from King's College London reveals how [vulnerable children](#) became less visible during the pandemic because they were hidden from the professional gaze and waited longer for identification of and referral for child protection concerns.

Children were also put at increased risk due to factors such as a rise in parental stress, diversion of healthcare services, disrupted education, and mental ill-health.

In light of the findings in their report, and amid increasing pressures caused by the cost-of-living crisis, King's researchers are proposing crucial actions to transform the existing system in what they say is a 'once-only opportunity' for government to rebalance safeguarding practice and avoid a 'crisis-driven approach' to child protection.

They recommend more cohesive government oversight, clear leadership, streamlined funding, shared outcome measures, strong local systems and accountability. They also endorse calls for a new Ministerial group or National Reform Board to oversee implementing reforms to the [child protection](#) system.

Lead author Dr. Jenny Driscoll, Reader in Children's Rights in the School of Education, Communication & Society at King's College London, said, "The impacts of child abuse can last a lifetime, so it is vital that we are proactive in our approach to alleviate the risks. The child safeguarding system is already under significant stress as a result of the extraordinary pressures imposed by the pandemic."

The report, informed by interviews and questionnaires with leaders and organizations in child safeguarding and protection, relevant research on the issue and a symposium which included [government officials](#), sector

leaders and representatives of young people, sets out three urgent areas of focus to transform the existing system:

1. Strengthening [early intervention](#) and investing more in early help programs to support children and families as soon as concerns are identified.
2. Ensuring robust inter-agency oversight and collaboration relating to safeguarding networks and leadership, including through [contingency plans](#) for redeployment.
3. Supporting the critical work undertaken by staff involved in [child](#) safeguarding through attention to capacity and well-being and supervision for all safeguarding specialists.

**More information:** Report: [www.kcl.ac.uk/ecs/assets/projects/child\\_safeguarding\\_practice.pdf](http://www.kcl.ac.uk/ecs/assets/projects/child_safeguarding_practice.pdf)

Provided by King's College London

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