Explain what is meant by partnership working in the context of safeguarding.

Safeguarding the welfare of children and young people is a complex process, which relies on effective partnership working between different agencies. In safeguarding situations, there may be several different services involved with the family, including health, education, social services and voluntary agencies, each with their own area of responsibility. It is extremely important that all these professionals work together and share information in order to co-ordinate support for the child or young person and their family. This is referred to as integrated working.

Integration means that services will work together more closely; they will plan and develop their strategies together and work in a co-ordinated way to support children, young people and families to achieve better outcomes.

Working in partnership to safeguard children and young people.

Integrated working focuses on enabling professionals from different agencies to work together and to put the family at the heart of all decisions that are made. Integrated services for children, young people and their families are delivered in a range of places, such as health centres, children’s centres and hospitals. For example, a health centre may act as a base for the community GP, health visiting and midwifery services, social worker support, parenting and family assistance and a source of information about local provision.

Working in an integrated way helps to identify the needs of children, young people and their families and is achieved through collaboration at all levels and across all services. It helps to:

- identify the needs of children and families earlier
• deliver a coordinated package of support that is centred on the child or young person
• secure better outcomes for children, young people and their families

Working Together to Safeguard Children (2013) clearly states that:

“No single professional can have a full picture of a child’s needs and, if children and families are to receive the right help, everyone who comes into contact with them has a role to play in identifying concerns, sharing information and taking prompt action”

There are a number of processes and tools designed to support partnership working in order to improve services for children, young people and families. These include information sharing, the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) and the Team Around The Child/Young Person approach.

The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) was introduced in 2005 as a standardised approach to identifying the needs of vulnerable children and young people and deciding how they should be met. The main aims of the CAF are to:

• help professionals assess children’s additional need for services earlier and more effectively
• make sure that families receive appropriate intervention when needed (well planned; regularly reviewed & effectively delivered)

The CAF summary should identify the strengths and needs of the child and family, and may be used to present information at a team around the child meeting or multi-agency case-conference. Some organisations use a ‘Team Around The Child’ approach, which brings together a team of professionals who have direct contact with the child or young person and family on a regular basis to provide practical support and advice.