

WILTSHIRE POLICE FORCE PROCEDURE



Child Abuse

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PROCEDURE OVERVIEW

This Procedure should be read in conjunction with the College of Policing Approved Professional Practice (APP) – [Major Investigation and Public Protection – Child Abuse](#). The guidance contained within APP is rightly replicated in this Procedure.

Introduction

Protecting and safeguarding our children is one of the most important roles of the Police Service.

Wiltshire Police is committed to providing a service which provides a robust response to all allegations of abuse against children in a manner which ensures the best possible protection is afforded to victims and witnesses.

The requirement for action in child abuse cases creates obligations at every stage of the Police response, from the initial deployment to the conclusion of any investigation.

The Procedure will also highlight the responsibility of all Wiltshire Police Staff in relation to safeguarding and the welfare of children.

Wiltshire Police is a statutory member of, and works closely with, each of the Safeguarding Partnerships - Swindon Safeguarding Partnership (SSP) and the Safeguarding Vulnerable People Partnership in Wiltshire.

The Procedure will reflect the Wiltshire Police 2021/2022 Control Strategy where the focus is on Protecting Vulnerable People from Harm and the Police & Crime Plan which focusses on 'Protecting the Most Vulnerable in Society' as one of their priorities.

It is also consistent with second version of the National Vulnerability Action Plan (NVAP).

Purpose

The purpose of this procedure is to ensure that Officers and Police Staff dealing with cases of Child Abuse identify and investigate allegations effectively.

The procedure will ensure that:

- Wiltshire Police will have a consistent approach to managing incidents of child abuse in line with the [College of Police Authorised Professional Practise for Child Abuse](#), the statutory guidance document "Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018" and the requirement of statutory organisations as set out under [section 11](#) of the Children Act 2004.
- Safeguarding of the child / children is at the centre of any decision making process and is the responsibility of all professionals who deal with them.
- Action is taken at all stages of the police response which will ensure that the child's voice and the child's needs are heard and acted upon.
- A Proactive multi- agency approach is adopted to prevent and reduce child abuse and neglect whilst also safeguarding children.
- Effective action is taken against offenders in a professional, appropriate and proportionate manner so that they can be held responsible through the criminal justice system.

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Applicability

The Children Act 2004 places a responsibility on the Chief Constable which states that they must make arrangements for ensuring that their functions are discharged having regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

This Procedure applies to:

- Police Officers and Police Staff who may receive a report of an incident involving a child, and those who deal with situations which may indicate concerns about a child.
- Police Supervisors and those involved in developing policy on Police responses to child abuse and safeguarding children.

RELATED POLICIES, PROCEDURES and OTHER DOCUMENTS

College of Policing Approved Professional Practice (APP) – Major Investigation and Public Protection – Child Abuse.

This Procedure should be read in conjunction with:

[HM Government \(2018\) Working Together to Safeguard Children](#)
[CPS \(2013\) Guidelines on Prosecuting Cases of Child Sexual Abuse](#)
[Ministry of Justice Achieving Best Evidence in Criminal Proceedings](#)

Children Act 2004

MASH Procedure

[Wiltshire Police Hierarchical Crime Review Procedure](#)

AUTHORISED PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

[Major Investigation and Public Protection – Child Abuse](#)

DATA PROTECTION

Any information relating to an identified or identifiable living individual recorded as a consequence of this procedure will be processed in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018, General Data Protection Regulations and the Force [Data Protection Policy](#).

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000

This document has been assessed as suitable for public release.

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

This procedure has been reviewed and drafted against all [protected characteristics](#) in accordance with the Public Sector Equality Duty embodied in the [Equality Act 2010](#). This procedure has therefore been Equality Impact Assessed to ensure 'due regard' in respect of the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, and victimisation.
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it. Protected characteristics are: age, disability gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation.
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

This procedure having been assessed has identified no potential impact in relation to the protected characteristics.

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HUMAN RIGHTS

The [Human Rights Act 1998](#) incorporates the Articles contained in the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) into domestic law, making it unlawful for public bodies to act in a way which is incompatible with the Convention.

This document has been drafted to comply with the principles of the Human Rights Act 1998.

MONITORING and REVIEW

This Procedure will be monitored by the thematic lead for Child Abuse and an agile approach will be taken to its up keep. Any significant change to national guidance or lessons learned through serious case review will be adopted into this procedure at the earliest opportunity. Updates to procedures will be communicated through the forces internal communications channels. A comprehensive review will be scheduled for two years with the strategic owner.

WHO TO CONTACT ABOUT THIS PROCEDURE

The ACC for Crime, Justice and Vulnerability is the lead officer for issues relating to safeguarding children.

The Head of the Public Protection Department is the strategic lead for child abuse. An identified Detective Inspector will be the thematic and tactical lead for child abuse and will be responsible for this Procedure. All queries relating to this Procedure should be directed to them.

1. KEY DEFINITIONS

1.1 Child Abuse

This is defined as any form of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family, or in an institutional or community setting by those known to them or others (eg, via the internet). They may be abused by an adult, or adults, or by another child or children.

The term Child Abuse includes physical; sexual; emotional abuse or the neglect of a child.

1.2 Child

A child is defined by the Children Acts 1989 and 2004 respectively. A child is anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday. The term child is used to include children and young people.

Under some legislation, however, the age is lower, for example, under [section 1](#) of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933 the age of the child is under 16 years.

Unless specific legislation indicates otherwise this procedure will refer to children under the age of 18 years.

The fact that a child has reached 16 years of age, is living independently; is looked after or is in further education; is a member of the armed forces; is in hospital or in custody, does not change his or her entitlement to services or protection.

1.3 Significant Harm

The Children Act 1989 introduced the concept of significant harm in order to assess the need for compulsory intervention in family life in the best interests of children. Under [section 47](#) of the Act, the local authority has a duty to make enquiries, or cause enquiries to be made, where it reasonably suspects that a child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm. The enquiries should enable the local authority to decide whether they should take action to safeguard the child and promote the child's welfare.

There is no legal or medical definition of significant harm. Sometimes a single, traumatic event may constitute significant harm, eg, a violent assault, suffocation or poisoning. More often, however, there is an accumulation of events which together constitute significant harm, but in isolation may appear unimportant.

Some children live in family and social circumstances where their health and development are neglected. For these children, it is the corrosiveness of long-term emotional, physical or sexual abuse that causes impairment to the extent of constituting significant harm.

The Children Act 1989 [section 31](#)(9) and (10) (as amended) gives the following definition of harm:

- 'harm' means ill-treatment or the impairment of health or development including, for example, impairment suffered from seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another
- 'development' means physical, intellectual, emotional, social or behavioural development
- 'health' means physical or mental health
- 'ill-treatment' includes sexual abuse and forms of ill-treatment which are not physical.

In determining whether the harm is significant, forces should compare the child's health and development with the health and development reasonably expected of a similar child.

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1.4 Child in Need

Where significant harm or its likelihood is not apparent, the local Authority may still have a duty under [section 17](#) of the Children Act 1989 to safeguard and promote the welfare of that child by providing a range and level of services. Early Interventions and support for a child in need can help to avert escalation to the point where a family is in crisis.

Any child identified as a child in need should be referred to the MASH by submitting a Police Protection Notice (PPN) via Niche - they will then refer this matter to Local Authority Children's Services to ensure that action is taken to safeguard that child and support their family.

See Appendix 1 for a full list of key definitions.

2. ROLES and RESPONSIBILITIES

2.1 The Public Protection Department

The Child Abuse Investigation Team (CAIT) within PPD is aligned to the two Local Authorities – Wiltshire and Swindon.

CAIT Investigators will be PIP2 accredited or in the process of seeking that accreditation having passed the NIE and having completed the relevant training. They will be expected to complete the Specialist Child Abuse Investigation Development Programme (SCAIDP) at the earliest available opportunity. These investigators will have responsibility for the investigation of the most serious child abuse offences.

The Child Abuse Investigation Team will undertake investigations of crime against children as below:

- Any inter-familial harm where the victim is a child at the time of reporting.
- Any harm against a child where the injury is serious or the allegation complex in nature and the suspect has a non-familial relationship.
- Any physical, sexual, emotional or neglect against a child where the offender is responsible for that child or in a position of trust.
- [Section 47](#) joint safeguarding investigations with Children Services, for children suffering, or at risk of suffering, significant harm.
- Any Honour Based Abuse (HBA) to a child, regardless of the offence type.
- Any concern or offences of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) to a child.
- PIP2 Domestic Abuse crimes where the Victim is under 18 years.
- High Risk PIP1 Domestic Abuse crimes where the Victim is under 18 years will be allocated to the most appropriate resource on an individual basis.
- Any attempt abduction or abduction of a child by a family member.

2.2 Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub – MASH

A Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) brings key professionals together to facilitate early, better quality information sharing, analysis and decision-making, to safeguard vulnerable children and young people more effectively. The MASH in both Wiltshire and Swindon is considered the 'front door' of safeguarding services; it can respond promptly, at the very earliest point of contact, with a vulnerable child and their family.

The service aims to provide a rapid and effective service in response to all new safeguarding concerns, where someone is concerned about the safety or wellbeing of a child or young person or thinks they may be at risk of harm.

The following agencies make up MASH in Wiltshire and Swindon:

- Social Care (Managers, Social Workers and information officers)
- Police
- Health
- Early Help representatives
- LADO(Local Authority Designated Officer) / DOFA (Designated Officer For Allegations)
- CAMHS
- Housing
- SPLITZ in Wiltshire and contact with Swindon Domestic Abuse Service.

The MASH is also in regular contact with the Exploitation Team, Probation, Education Welfare Teams as well Adult Mental Health Services and the Army Welfare Service.

2.3 Assistant Chief Constable – Crime, Justice and Vulnerability

The Chief Officer Lead for child abuse Investigations will be the ACC for Crime, Justice and Vulnerability and has responsibility for leadership within the Organisation on Public Protection issues.

2.4 Strategic Child Abuse Lead

The Detective Superintendent is the Head of Public Protection and will take responsibility for the following:

- They will be the owner of the child abuse procedure and supporting guidance and is responsible for advising chief officers and CPT management teams.
- Providing strategic leadership and direction for the organisation.
- The development and implementation of policies, guidance and protocols.
- Providing a specialist source of advice and guidance and to promote good practice.
- Engaging with key partners at a strategic level.
- Presenting performance data regarding vulnerability at the Vulnerability Operations Board.
- Commissioning audits to ensure consistent quality and effective delivery of service and to inform future good practice.
- Ensuring PPD staff has access to occupational health services.
- Review child protection investigations at the 12 month stage.

2.5 Detective Chief Inspector

The Detective Chief Inspector is the Deputy Head of Public Protection and will take responsibility for the following:

- Plan, manage and monitor complex policing activity across the child abuse, domestic abuse, exploitation and adults at risk portfolios.
- Promote best practice and enable continuous improvement in evidence-based policing across the department and force by championing the National Vulnerability Action Plan (NVAP) and the force response to Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) recommendations relevant to vulnerability.
- Manage competing demands and priorities to make informed deployment decisions and ensure best use of available resources – representing the Head of Department at Force Tasking and the Resource Management Panel.
- Contribute to the setting, monitoring and assessment of team key performance indicators (KPIs) to support the achievement of wider objectives.
- Analyse performance data and information against team objectives in order to report against performance management measures and inform workforce planning.
- Lead, motivate and engage the four tactical Detective Inspectors and their teams in protecting the vulnerable department.

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- Protect and promote workforce wellbeing to uphold professional standards and enable high performing teams.
 - Identify and manage initial responses to major and / or critical incidents in alignment with relevant frameworks and guidance, ensuring appropriate resource allocation and risk management to enable effective service delivery.
 - Develop and maintain relationships with multi-agency partners to drive collaboration and inform policing priorities and plans.
 - Lead the analysis and evaluation of existing processes and practices within their area of work in order to identify and implement opportunities for change and innovation, promote best practice and enable continuous improvement in evidence-based policing within teams.
 - To build on relationships with other departments to identify ways to work more efficiently together, ensuring a consistent approach across the force.
 - Provide resilience to the SIO and K&E call rota

2.6 Detective Inspector with responsibility for the Child Abuse Investigation Teams.

The Detective Inspector will have responsibility to ensure the following:

- All national and local Policy and guidance is complied with.
- To complete hierarchical crime reviews in compliance with Force policy.
- Attendance at multi agency meetings and where appropriate chair meetings.
- Develop and maintain multi agency relationships.
- Liaise with the Detective Chief Inspector on operational and personnel issues, including issues are resources and staffing of CAIT.
- Identify and address training needs and manage staff performance and wellbeing.
- Keep up to date with legislation, Authorised Professional Practice (APP), force policy, joint agency protocols and reports by outside agencies that may impact on the Department.
- Prepare a report for the D/Superintendent when child abuse investigation cases reach the 12 month stage.
- To review cases of serious sexual assault where a supervisor has made a decision that no further action should be taken.

2.7 Protect Detective Inspector – Children/Exploitation

Detective Inspector's will hold responsibility for Children (MASH and CIET) and the Exploitation Team.

2.8 Detective Sergeant with responsibility for Child Abuse Investigation Team (CAIT)

The CAIT Detective Sergeant will have responsibility to ensure the following:

- Compliance with APP and any local policy / procedures that relate to the investigation of child abuse.
- Ensure compliance with the [Hierarchical Crime Review Procedure](#).
- Supervision and quality assurance for all child abuse investigations. This will include an initial review after 24hrs that includes setting or validating priority actions with the Officer in Case (OIC) and then a detailed review including setting or validating a bespoke investigation plan after 7 days.
- To conduct regular work control meetings with staff in order to review on- going investigations and discuss staff well-being and training.
- To provide specialist advise in cases relating to child protection and safeguarding.
- Supervise, manage and develop staff.
- Ensure the welfare of staff by maintaining an awareness of personnel problems and direct to Occupational Health Services if appropriate.
- Identify and address training needs and manage staff performance.

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- Keep up to date with legislation, force policy, joint agency protocols and reports by outside agencies that may impact on the unit's work.
 - Escalate all relevant investigations to the appropriate Detective Inspector when they pass 3 months since the date of reporting.
 - Ensure CPD is maintained to ensure continued accreditation.

2.9 Duty Inspectors and CPT/CPTN First Line Supervisors

All supervisors (whether in specialist teams or in response) are responsible for ensuring that all incidents involving reports of child abuse are correctly investigated, with all actions taken being consistent with this procedure and APP.

Supervisors and managers are expected to supervise the investigation to ensure the integrity and quality of initial "golden hour" enquiries before handing over to the specialist team. This will include ensuring that immediate safeguarding considerations are dealt with.

Supervisors are responsible that when appropriate a PPN is submitted to MASH as soon as reasonably practicable via the task functionality on NICHE.

2.10 Child Abuse Investigation Team Investigators

CAIT Investigators will have responsibility to ensure the following:

- Compliance with APP and any relevant national or local policy / procedure.
- Compliance with the [Hierarchical Crime Review Procedure](#).
- Record a detailed investigation plan to show how the case will be investigated and ensure that the plan is reviewed on a regular basis.
- The Victims Code is complied with and that regular contact is maintained with the families involved. A record of all contact will be recorded on the Occurrence Entry Log (OEL).
- Attend and provide active input to relevant Initial/Review Child Protection Case Conferences, implementing actions from those meetings and contributing to other multi-agency arrangements as required.
- Take responsibility for their Continuous Professional Development (CPD) to ensure continued accreditation.

3. Responding to Reports of Child Abuse

The police have a legal obligation to safeguard and protect children. Concerns for the safety of officers attending an incident should not prevent them being deployed to protect a child.

All frontline officers and staff have an important role in protecting children and in the early identification of safeguarding and other child protection concerns. Attending staff should abide by the Golden Hour Principles whilst capitalising on "reachable moments" to capture the voice of the child; for example if a child is in the middle of disclosing abuse, they should not be interrupted and the officer should not ask any questions. In some cases, this will be important evidence.

Suspected or actual child abuse can come to police attention from a number of various sources including victims; witnesses; health services; Children's Services; education professionals and anonymous reports – or by police officers and police staff identifying concerns about children through routine contact with the public.

All allegations of child abuse are potentially serious, but in cases that are particularly urgent or serious, officers should update their supervisor without delay e.g. child with serious physical injury, serious sexual offence and serious or chronic neglect. CAIT Investigators should also be contacted to attend the scene unless out of office hours, in which case, the on call Senior Investigating Officer (SIO) should be informed.

3.1 Initial Police Response and Immediate Considerations

3.1.1 Public Enquiry Office

The Public Enquiry Assistant must prioritise the safety of the victim and any other potential victims giving safety or other advice as appropriate. The welfare and safety of children is paramount.

Where possible the reporting person/child or young person should be spoken to in a private area away from other members of the public. On establishing sufficient details of the nature of the incident the matter should then be referred to Contact Management for creation of an incident log and the appropriate resource allocation.

The reporting person should be kept informed as to how soon an officer will be available to deal with the matter. If the person attending the police station is a child, the Public Enquiry Assistant should only ask sufficient questions to gain essential information for the deployment of officers.

3.1.2 Contact Management

The call taker must prioritise the safety of the caller, victim and any other potential victims, and give safety or other advice as required.

Initial questioning should determine what happened, where and when. The safety of individuals can then be addressed and decisions made about the order in which information is gathered. This will provide reassurance and ensure an appropriate response

A report to Police via Contact Management should include the following when creating a storm log for Officers to attend:

- Establish that the caller and victim are safe.
- Obtain details of the caller and relationship to the child/children – ascertaining who has parental responsibility.
- Obtain details of the callers safeguarding concerns.
- Consider the immediate safeguarding of the child/children.
- Conduct research on those involved to assist attending Officers – Complete Intel checks to establish any previous reports, include Niche, PNC, Civil Orders, bail conditions, and if necessary, make direct contact with the relevant Local Authority Children’s Services department or Emergency Duty team.
- Establish if any Court Orders apply – if they do, does it carry a power of arrest.
- Advise caller on securing the scene and potential evidence to include the following:
 - (a) Not to move anything (and not allow others to do so).
 - (b) Not to clean up or tidy the house
If the circumstances of the offence warrant it – advise the victim that the Victim should not wash, shower or change their clothing.
If Not to allow children, relatives, neighbours or animals to enter areas where the reported incident is alleged to have taken place.
 - (g) Advise that any computers, phones or photographic equipment should be left untouched.
- Send officers to the scene.
- Follow contact management guidance.

3.1.3 Initial Response Officer Attending the Scene

Officers should focus their efforts from the outset of a child abuse investigation on gathering evidence in order to charge a suspect and build a prosecution case that does not rely entirely on the victim’s statement.

Failure to exercise police powers relating to the protection of children, investigation and/or arrest may leave a victim at risk from further offences.

An initial risk assessment should be carried out to inform the officer's decision making. Whenever the Police have concern for a child, and at every stage of their involvement with that child, decisions are made which involve assessing and managing risk. Concerns can arise from circumstances not explicitly reported as child abuse, and from reports relating to other crimes. Wiltshire Police uses THRIVE+ as a risk assessment tool. This should be applied in respect of all reports of child abuse.

3.1.4 Child in Need

On attending a scene and the Officers form the belief that the child/children are in need of support but may not meet the criteria for further police action, the attending Officer must:

- Establish the welfare of the child.
- Inform the MASH by submitting a PPN via a Niche task.
- Where possible, the parent / carer should be informed that a referral will be made to the MASH and that information will be shared with other agencies such as Children Services; Health and Education. Consent should be sought from the person with parental responsibility (PR) or a recorded reason why this has not occurred, not seeking consent can affect how information is shared.

3.1.5 Child / Children at Risk of Significant Harm

On attending a scene and it is stated or believed that a child is in need of protection i.e., suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm, the attending Officer must:

- Establish the welfare of the child / children.
- Every effort must be made to see and speak to them and any other children present, or who normally reside at the premises to establish that they are unharmed and not at future risk of harm. Officers should do this at the point of initial contact.
- Officers need to communicate with children in a way that is appropriate to their age, understanding and preferred manner of communication.
- Officers should avoid questions that are leading and suggestive, but should not allow themselves to be deterred from speaking to a child by concerns over compromising a formal investigation in the future, as the safeguarding of the child/children should be the main priority.
- Body worn cameras may be used to record initial accounts, only where the victim has consented and has the capacity to consent ([College of Policing briefing note for police first responders to a report of rape or sexual assault.](#))
- There is no legal requirement for a parent or other adult to be present or to give consent for an officer to talk to a child in order to establish the child's welfare at the point of initial contact.
- In cases where the Officers suspect that an adult who is present may have some involvement in the abuse, a request should be made to speak to the child separately. If an adult refuses access to speak to a child, a record should be made of the officer's request and the adult's response, and a supervisor's guidance sought. When it becomes clear that one of the parents or carers has no involvement in the suspected abuse, it is good practice to seek that parent's cooperation.
- As soon as the welfare of the child has been established or the officer has determined that the child is at risk of harm or has already been harmed, the conversation should be brought to a close so that it does not constitute an interview. If a child is in the middle of disclosing abuse, they should not be interrupted and the officer should not ask any questions. In some cases, this will be important evidence.

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- Record a description of the child's physical appearance including injuries, clothing and state of cleanliness and demeanour.
 - Attention should be paid to how the child looks and behaves and any significant comment or action be recorded.
 - Description of the child's surroundings, including the condition of the home, for example – is there food in the fridge and cupboards; do the children have appropriate bedding and how clean is their living environment.
 - Consider the use of Interpreters – Officers at scene must establish if an interpreter is required. Where possible, the witness' (or suspect's) preference as regards gender, religion or cultural background should be accommodated. Different interpreters should be used for the suspect, victim and witnesses where possible. Officers should not use family members, in particular children, to interpret unless as a last resort and then only to establish facts that might secure the immediate safety of all parties. Where a member of the family or member of the public interprets at the scene, their details should be recorded.
 - Secure, preserve and control the scene to limit any access until sufficient information is available to make an informed assessment of the situation. Note that the victim is the primary scene and should be treated as such. The first concern of the officer should be the child's safety, state of mind and their ability to cope with forensic requests (this is dependent upon the age of the child concerned, their understanding and the nature of the alleged incident).
 - Protection of the scene of crime should be a consideration in all cases, including those where there is a time lapse between the report and the alleged offence.
 - Obtain details of all witnesses and make accurate records of everything said by all parties, including any significant statements made by the suspect.
 - If appropriate, consider arrest of the alleged offender.
 - Consider the value of house to house enquiries and seizing CCTV evidence.
 - Digital evidence – In cases where there is evidence to suggest that a digital device may have evidence of the offence, or is discovered in the possession of a suspect who may have used it as part of their offending, it should be treated as a crime scene. It is vital that consent is obtained and recorded prior to the examination of a victims device.
 - If, out of hours, the Supervisor / Duty Inspector consider that an urgent strategy discussion is required they should inform the relevant children services Emergency Duty Service (EDS). A record of the strategy discussion should be entered on the OEL within Niche.
 - Inform PPD by completing a PPN and submitting to MASH via a Niche task.
 - Consider Police Protection – [section 46](#) of the Children Act 1989 provides the power to do this. The power to remove and accommodate children should be exercised sparingly by police officers. It is an emergency power that should only be used if it is not possible to leave a child in any given situation without them being at risk of significant harm. Before exercising the power, Officers should contact children services (or if out of hours EDS) as they may hold additional information on the family that may influence the decision making, particularly around other family members who may be in a position to look after the children, thus negating the requirement for Police Protection.
 - The relevant children services department will be responsible for accommodating the young person if they are to be removed from their current location. It may be that family members are identified who are willing to accommodate the young person negating the need to take the child /children into police protection. If this is the case, all necessary background checks must be carried out to ensure that it will be a safe environment for the child / children.

Although any constable can take the decision to take a child into police protection it is the responsibility of the designated officer (this should be an Inspector and will usually be the relevant Duty Inspector) to ensure that appropriate enquiries are conducted and liaison is made with children's services. [Form 78 \(PPA1\)](#) must be completed and linked to the niche occurrence. Police Protection can remain in place for up to 72 hours, however the protection must be discharged as soon as the child / children are no longer considered to be a risk of significant harm.

- Powers of Entry – Officers may be confronted with a situation where it is necessary to enter premises in order to ensure the protection of a child, for example, where a parent or carer refuses permission to see the child and there is concern for that child.

The powers listed below provide a legal background against which powers of entry could be exercised. If an offence is reasonably suspected or there is a reasonable suspicion of harm to a child, an officer will be acting legally in obtaining entry. It may be that refusal to allow entry by a parent or carer arouses suspicion that a child has been harmed and indicates an intention to conceal that harm. The appropriate exercise of powers of entry in order to protect a child and / or respond to suspicions of child abuse should not breach the Human Rights Act 1998 or their rights under the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). Officers should record in their pocket notebook their reasons for taking action (eg, explain why they considered the exercise of powers of entry to be legal, necessary and proportionate):

Under [section 17\(1\)\(b\)](#) of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE) 1984, a constable may enter and search any premises for the purpose of arresting a person for an indictable offence.

Under [section 17\(1\)](#) PACE, a constable may enter and search premises for the purpose of saving life and limb or preventing serious harm to property.

Under Common Law a constable has the power to enter premises to prevent or deal with a Breach of the Peace.

Under [section 48](#) of the Children Act 1989, a warrant may be obtained to search for children who may be in need of protection.

A record of all searches should be made in accordance with PACE.

4. Investigating Reports of Child Abuse

Staff should refer to the '[Principles of an Investigation](#)' contained within APP, [Achieving Best Evidence in Criminal Proceedings](#) and [HM Government \(2018\) Working Together to Safeguard Children](#).

Holding a strategy discussion should be considered from the outset of receiving a report of Child Abuse and the management of the investigation should also be consistent with any plan agreed within the strategy discussion.

All allegations of child abuse / sexual offences against a child when the alleged perpetrator is a stranger should be dealt with, in the first instance, by the appropriate Community Policing Team (CPT) resource. For child abuse cases being investigated by a department outside the Child Protection Team, a PPN must be submitted to MASH so that consideration can be given to any immediate or future Safeguarding needs of that child.

When a child abuse investigation is of a serious or complex nature, consideration should be given to appointing a senior investigating officer (SIO). The decision to appoint a SIO will normally be taken by an officer of the rank of Detective Inspector or above.

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4.1 Strategy Discussion

Working Together 2018 states that whenever there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm there should be a strategy discussion involving local authority children's social care (including the residential or fostering service, if the child is looked-after), the Police, Health, Education and other bodies such as the referring agency.

The MASH will be responsible for conducting strategy discussions Monday to Friday, police staff within MASH will cover strategy discussions with EDS if necessary between 0800 – 1800 hrs on weekdays. They will also provide cover over weekends and Bank Holidays between 0800-1600 hrs. However, if the young person involved is a missing person or already subject to an investigation by PPD, the Duty Inspector or Duty CAIT DS (for open investigations) will be responsible for conducting the strategy discussion.

MASH will ensure that the documents relating to the strategy discussion are linked to the niche occurrence. If the strategy discussion has resulted in a S47 investigation the Duty CAIT DS will be notified.

A S47 investigation is initiated when a Local Authority has reasonable cause to suspect that a child (who lives or is found in their area) is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm, it has a duty to make such enquiries as it considers necessary to decide whether to take any action to safeguard or promote the child's welfare. Such enquiries, supported by other agencies, as appropriate, should be carried out for all forms of abuse and neglect.

Where it has been agreed by the police and children's social care, in a strategy discussion, that it is in the best interests of the child that a full criminal investigation be carried out, the police are responsible for that investigation, including any investigative interview (video-recorded or otherwise) with the victim. Having responsibility for the criminal investigation does not mean that the police should always take the lead in the investigative interview. Provided both the police officer and social worker have been adequately trained to interview child witnesses, there is no reason why either should not lead the interview. The relevant Children's Services has the lead agency responsibility for the welfare of the child under the [Children Act 1989](#).

Out of hours it is the responsibility of FIM to identify a suitably qualified officer to conduct a strategy discussion, usually with the Emergency Duty Service for cases that require a multi-agency approach. A record of the strategy discussion must be entered within the Niche Occurrence.

4.2 Joint Investigation Visit

When a S47 Joint Investigation has been agreed, a decision will be made as to whether it will be appropriate to carry out a joint visit to speak with the victim. If this is agreed, a decision will be made as to who will take the lead in this initial visit. One member of the joint investigation team must be Specialist Child Abuse Investigation Development Programme (SCAIDP) accredited.

The purpose of a joint visit between Police and Children's Social Care is to see the child and establish their welfare. Joint visits are a useful investigative tool and can greatly assist in the risk assessment process. They can assist in establishing if a crime has taken place, assess the risk of harm and assess a child's cognitive development and ability to provide an account during a visually recorded interview.

Enquiries should be carried out in such a way as to minimise distress to the child and to ensure that families are treated sympathetically and with respect. The decision as to whether to conduct a joint investigative interview or joint visits should be determined by what is in the best interests of the child, for example, by limiting the number of occasions that the child has to relate an account of what has happened to them or reducing the frequency of agency visits to the child's home.

Any initial questioning should be intended to confirm a brief account of what is alleged to have taken place; a more detailed account should not be pursued at this stage but should be left until the formal interview takes place. If a disclosure is made the questioning should stop.

4.3 Medical Examinations of Child Victims

When a child presents with an immediate or recent assault a child protection and/or forensic medical examination should be considered.

Where a Child Protection and forensic medical examination are both required, every effort should be made to ensure that they are conducted at the same time rather than at different times, by different medical staff and varying locations if required the on call Paediatrician should be invited to the strategy discussion.

A strategy discussion should include the medical examiner (Consultant Paediatrician) for the majority of children who disclose assault (and for all those who disclose sexual assault that took place sometimes weeks, months or even years earlier). Late examinations may offer important forensic and clinical information as well as the opportunity to start the therapeutic process.

Children under the age of 16 will attend The Bridge in Bristol to have the medical undertaken for sexual assault cases.

Subject to the Strategy discussion, those children aged 16 years and over may have their medical carried out at the SARC in Swindon by the on call Paediatrician. This will be in agreement with the on call Forensic Paediatrician at the Bridge.

Consent must be obtained for the medical examination as failure to do so may constitute assault. A forensic medical examination may be carried out only with the consent of the child providing that the child has the capacity to give consent ([Gillick v West Norfolk and Wisbech Area Health Authority \[1986\] 1 AC 112](#)) or with consent from the parent, carer or person with parental responsibility. Parental consent is assumed to be a proxy for the best interests of the child. However, if the parents are not acting in the child's best interests, this may need the intervention of the court.

A child below the age of 16 years can give consent if they have 'sufficient understanding and intelligence to enable him or her to understand fully what is proposed'. In deciding whether a child is able to consent, the question is whether they can understand the nature, purpose and possible consequences of the examination. This includes considering if they can:

- Understand the information relevant to the decision.
- Retain that information.
- Use and weigh up the information as part of the process of making the decision.
- Communicate their decision by talking, using sign language or any other means.

In deciding whether a child has the capacity to consent, all information needs to be considered. This decision depends more on the child's ability to understand and weigh up options than on age.

If there is no one with parental responsibility available or the parent or carer refuses consent, the local authority may apply for an emergency protection order (which gives parental responsibility to the local authority) or a child assessment order.

4.4 Interviewing Child Victims and Witnesses

This procedure will assist in describing good practice when conducting video interviews and/or written statements with victims and witnesses. This will enable young persons to give their best evidence.

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The procedure should be read in conjunction with [Achieving Best Evidence in Criminal Proceedings](#).

A video-recorded interview serves two primary purposes:

- The evidence-in-chief of the witness
- Evidence gathering for use in the investigation and in criminal proceedings

In addition, any relevant information gained during the interview can also be used to inform enquiries regarding significant harm under [section 47](#) of the Children Act 1989 and any subsequent actions to safeguard and promote the child's welfare. In some cases, the information gained will be used to ensure the safeguarding and welfare of other children.

An interview with a child should only take place after the strategy discussion with Children Services, however, it should not be delayed solely for the purposes of a strategy discussion if it is not in the best interests of the child to do so.

A well-conducted interview will only occur if appropriate planning has taken place. The importance of planning cannot be overstated. The success of an interview and, thus, an investigation could hinge on it. Planning must include a witness assessment of the young person in order to establish what/if any support is required. Even if the circumstances necessitate an early interview, an appropriate planning session that takes account of all the information available about the victim/witness at the time and identifies the key issues and objectives is required. The documents linked to Niche and outlining the result of the strategy discussion should form part of the planning process.

Consent – before conducting a video recorded interview with children, consent is required except in the following circumstances:

If the child can understand the implications of what they are being asked to consent to and is able to consent in their own right, consent of someone with parental responsibility is not necessary. However, the force should inform a parent or carer before the interview takes place, unless there are exceptional reasons for not doing so, including:

- The possibility exists that a child would be threatened or otherwise coerced into silence
- There is a strong likelihood that important evidence would be destroyed
- The child in question does not wish the parent to be involved at that stage, and is competent to make that decision.

If the child does not have the capacity to consent in their own right and cannot understand the implications of what they are being asked to consent to, consent of someone with parental responsibility is necessary. However, if consent cannot be secured, Children Services can consider obtaining an emergency protection order under [section 44](#) of the Children Act 1989, with the necessary directions on it if the child is at risk of significant harm.

Where the force decides not to inform a parent or carer for the exceptional circumstances above, they should carefully document this decision.

The Interviewer – Consideration should be given to who is best qualified to lead the interview. A special blend of skills is required to take the lead in video-recorded interviews. The lead interviewer should be a person who has established or is likely to be able to establish rapport with the witness, who understands how to communicate effectively with witnesses who might become distressed, and who has a proper grasp of the rules of evidence and criminal offences. The lead interviewer must have good knowledge of information important to the investigation, including the points needed to prove particular offences.

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The interview Monitor – Whenever possible an interview monitor should be present because they can help to ensure that the interview is conducted in a professional manner, can assist in identifying any gaps in the witness’s account that emerge, and can ensure that the witness’s needs are kept paramount. The interview monitor has a vital role in observing the lead interviewer’s questioning and the witness’s demeanour. The interview monitor can reflect back to the planning discussions and communicate with the lead interviewer as necessary. Such observation and monitoring can be essential to the overall clarity and completeness of the video-recorded account, which will be especially important in court.

Interpreter – Witnesses should always be interviewed in the language of their choice, unless exceptional circumstances prevail (for example, in respect of the availability of interpreters). This will normally be the witness’s first language, unless specific circumstances result in their second language being more appropriate. Interviewers should be aware that some witnesses could be perfectly fluent in English, but might use their first language to express intimate or more complex concepts. As a result, the possibility of using an interpreter should be considered while planning the interview, even where a witness is bilingual. Further information can be found on SharePoint under: [Regional Interpreters Standard Operating Procedure](#).

Intermediary – Before an intermediary can assist with communication they need to conduct one or more assessment meetings with the witness. The criminal case is not discussed during assessment meetings. These meetings enable the intermediary to consider the witness’s communication needs and devise strategies and recommendations for how to maximise understanding. The meetings also enable the intermediary to build the necessary rapport with the witness and to determine whether they (the intermediary) are the right person to act as an intermediary for that witness. Intermediaries should never be alone with a witness; a responsible third party must be present. This should usually be a police officer at the investigation stage.

An intermediary may be able to help improve the quality of evidence of any vulnerable adult or child witness (as defined in [section 16](#) Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act 1999) who is unable to detect and cope with misunderstanding, or to clearly express their answers to questions, especially in the context of an interview or while giving evidence in court. Intermediaries are not available to ‘intimidated’ witnesses as defined by [section 17](#) Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act 1999 (unless they can also be categorised as ‘vulnerable’) or significant witnesses.

The NCA should be contacted in order to obtain the services of a Registered Intermediary. An unregistered intermediary can only be used if all other means of obtaining a registered intermediary have been exhausted.

An entry must be made within the Investigation Plan to show that consideration was given an Intermediary and a rationale if a decision was made not to employ one.

4.5 Special Measures

The [Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act 1999](#) (YJCEA) – introduced a range of measures that can be used to facilitate the gathering and giving of evidence by vulnerable and intimidated witnesses. The measures are collectively known as “special measures”.

Special measures are a series of provisions that help vulnerable and intimidated witnesses give their best evidence in court and help to relieve some of the stress associated with giving evidence. Special measures apply to prosecution and defence witnesses, but not to the defendant and are subject to the discretion of the court.

A vulnerable or intimidated witness will be eligible for special measures under sections 16 to 33 of the [YJCEA](#).

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Vulnerable witnesses are defined by [section 16](#) YJCEA as:

- All child witnesses (under 18 – as amended by [section 98\(2\)](#) of the Coroners and Justice Act 2009 to substitute 17 for 18); and
- Any witness whose quality of evidence is likely to be diminished because they: °are suffering from a mental disorder (as defined by [section 1\(2\)](#) of the Mental Health Act 1983 and amended into a single definition by section 1(2) of the Mental Health Act 2007 – see the Mental Health legal guidance);
- Has a significant impairment of intelligence and social functioning
- Has a physical disability or are suffering from a physical disorder.

Intimidated witnesses are defined by [section 17](#) YJCEA as:

Those suffering from fear or distress in relation to testifying in the case. Complainants in sexual offences are defined by section 17(4) as automatically falling into this category unless they wish to opt out.

The special measures available to vulnerable and intimidated witnesses, with the agreement of the court, include:

- Screens
- Live link
- Evidence given in private
- Removal of wigs and gowns by Judges and Barristers
- Visual Recorded Interview
- Pre-trial visual recorded cross examination or re-examination
- Examination of the witness through an intermediary
- Aids to communication

It is not uncommon for a child witness to change their views about giving evidence using particular Special Measures. Therefore, Special Measures discussions should be ongoing and discussed at the police interview stage, before submission of a Special Measures application and reviewed again after a pre-court familiarisation visit.

4.6 Child Witnesses under 10 Years

As above, [section 16](#) of the Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act 1999 recognises children's vulnerability and automatically classifies child witnesses as being eligible for Special Measures. However, despite the use of these measures, the judicial process can still be too slow to afford very young witnesses the opportunity of providing their best evidence.

To that end a [Protocol between the National Police Chiefs Council \(NPCC\); Crown Prosecutions Service \(CPS\); HM Courts and Tribunal Service](#) has been issued in order to ensure that cases involving witnesses under 10 years can be expedited.

The Protocol only applies to cases charged on or after 1 April 2015 where:

- A witness is under the age of 10 at the time the incident is reported to the police; and
- The witness under 10 has provided an evidential statement or Achieving Best Evidence (ABE) interview in relation to the incident, either in support of the prosecution or defence.

When a case involves a victim or witness under the age of 10 years the protocol should be adhered to.

Although the Protocol refers specifically to Under 10, CPS should be consulted if an investigation involves a young person over 10 but under the age 13 years.

4.7 Victim/Witness welfare

It is important that child victims and witnesses should be treated in a respectful, sensitive, tailored and professional manner without discrimination of any kind. They should receive appropriate support to help them, as far as possible, to cope and recover and be protected from re-victimisation.

The [Code of Practice for Victims of Crime \(The Victim's Code\)](#) sets out the minimum standard of service and aims to ensure that victims of crime are provided with timely, accurate information about their case at all stages of the criminal justice process.

The nature and sensitivity of child abuse cases will inevitably mean that Officers and Staff should go beyond the minimum requirements of the Victims Code where appropriate to do so and a record placed on the OEL on each occasion contact is made with the victim/witness.

The Wiltshire Police [Hierarchical Crime Review \(HCR\) Procedure](#) sets out the standard expected of Officers and Staff when dealing with victims and witnesses.

4.8 Counselling and Therapy

The best interests of the victim or witness are paramount when making decisions about therapy. There is no bar to a victim seeking pre-trial therapy or counselling and neither the Police nor the CPS should prevent it from taking place. CPS should be consulted if the victim wishes to undergo therapy prior to the trial so that they can advise on the correct approach to take.

4.9 Third Party Material / Family Court Proceedings

Investigators and Prosecutors should handle requests for Local Authority material in accordance with any applicable local protocol, together with the below mentioned national guidance.

Records held by other agencies (particularly children's social care or the NSPCC) may reveal previous reports or incidents, evidence of the existence of abuse or evidence of the impact of abuse that will assist the investigation. This can include information from agencies involved before or after the investigation. Such third-party material may also provide corroborative evidence to support or disprove an allegation.

Investigators are under a duty to pursue all reasonable line of enquiry, whether these point towards or away from a suspect.

When considering the request for third party material the following documents should be consulted:

- 2013 Protocol for Disclosure of Information in Cases of Alleged Child Abuse and Linked Criminal and Care Directions Hearings.
- Child Sex Abuse: Guidelines on Prosecuting Cases of Child Sexual Abuse, should be consulted (para's 129 – 143)
- Chapter 4 of the Disclosure Manual
- Working Together 2018

4.10 Suspect considerations

Individuals who are suspected of child abuse require additional considerations both pre and post charge.

When a decision has been made to release a suspect with or without charge, the risks the suspect poses to the victim, the risks others pose to the suspect and the risk to the suspect themselves need to be considered.

The risk posed by the suspect is particularly relevant when the suspect is a member of the victim's household, a relative, friend or associate with routine access, or they have access to other children (eg, through their profession or hobbies). In these circumstances, it may be appropriate to involve other agencies in the risk management process.

When an individual who is suspect of sexual offences involving children (both contact and non-contact offences) is investigated, then they must be given advice and guidance regarding their own welfare.

For individuals arrested and bailed, Custody Staff will conduct a pre discharge risk assessment and note this has been done on the custody record. For those invited for interview, it will be the responsibility of the interviewing member of staff to ensure that a risk assessment with the individual is carried out and the details recorded on the occurrence.

Supervisors and Investigators will ensure that the guidelines set out in the [Hierarchical Crime Review Procedure](#) are adhered to.

Whenever an individual is investigated for a child abuse offence, enquiries must be made in relation to their living circumstances and what contact they have with children. Following these enquiries, where necessary, a PPN should be forwarded to the MASH so appropriate risk assessments can be carried out to safeguard children from the offender whilst the investigation is ongoing. When the suspect is investigated, released under investigation or charged, further enquiries must be carried out to establish if their living circumstances or their access to children has changed.

4.11 Early Advice Files to CPS

Officers should note that all child abuse cases fall within the pre-charge advice scheme, even when a guilty plea is likely. Pre-charge advice and charging decisions should be sought in accordance with local systems.

Early and ongoing liaison with the CPS is important as it helps the crown prosecutor to make decisions about a particular case, and supports a successful prosecution. It also helps to identify measures necessary for the protection of the victim(s), if applying for a remand in custody or prior to a sentencing decision.

The information in the file preparation checklist will not always be readily available, but it should be passed to the CPS as soon as possible. The CPS must be updated of any change in circumstances.

4.12 Media

Investigating Officers and Staff should be aware that child abuse investigations often provoke very emotive media coverage that, if uncontrolled and inappropriate, can lead the defence to suggest that the defendant is unable to have a fair trial.

It is essential that victims and their families are protected from the potential trauma that may be associated with media interest in their cases.

Whenever it is apparent that a particular case has attracted media interest, advice must be sought from the Communications Department, and a media strategy agreed.

4.13 Child Protection Conferences

Following S47 enquiries, where concerns of significant harm are substantiated and the child is judged to be suffering or likely to suffer significant harm, an Initial Child Protection Conference (ICPC) will be convened by Children's Services. This convenes family members (and where appropriate, the child), with supporters, advocates and professionals involved with the child and family, to make decisions about the child's future safety, health and development. Initial Child Protection Conferences can also be called for unborn children. The ICPC should take place within 15 days of the strategy discussion.

Wiltshire Police have Child Protection Conference Attendees who attend all ICPC's in County and Swindon. If there is an ongoing investigation, the Child Protection Conference Co-Ordinator will advise the OIC and if they wish to attend the Centre for Prevention of Child Abuse (CPCA) will prepare the report and submit the report on their behalf.

In relation to attendance at Review Conferences in Swindon, CPCA's are not expected to attend but will provide an updated report. However, the OIC can make a decision to attend if they consider that their attendance would be appropriate.

In County, Children Services do not expect Police to attend a Review Conference unless specifically invited and do not require an updated report.

4.14 Exit Strategy

As the investigation draws to a close the Investigator should put a plan in place to withdraw from the family so that the victim fully understands the journey of the investigation, this is particularly important in cases where no further action is being taken. This should be done in a caring and considerate manner and if possible, face to face. It will also allow the Investigator to ensure the ongoing welfare of the victim and enable signposting to appropriate support agencies.

5. MANAGING ALLEGATIONS AGAINST PROFESSIONALS

Both Wiltshire and Swindon Local Authorities have a Manager whose role is to ensure both the management and oversight of matters where allegations are made against those who work with children. Position of trust encompasses a variety of workers, primarily employed by education, health care, religious establishments, and care facilities, but also includes anyone undertaking paid or unpaid work involving any contact with children.

An allegation may relate to a person who works with children who has:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child.
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child.
- Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children.

Wiltshire Council – Designated Officer for Allegations (DOFA)

Swindon Council – Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)

5.1 Managing Allegations against Police Officers/Police Staff

Wiltshire Police, will not, under any circumstances, tolerate any member of staff being involved in or connected with the abuse of children.

Investigating allegations where a member of staff is the suspect, remains the responsibility of specialist officers, both within CAIT and Professional Standards. However, the initial response may often fall to non-specialist officers, but should not differ from any other response to an allegation of child abuse.

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6. THE EXPLOITATION AND MISSING TEAM

The Exploitation and Missing Team is a pro-active team of investigators and support staff who will lead on intelligence led investigations into child exploitation (criminal and sexual), adult sexual exploitation, modern slavery and human trafficking, missing persons (tactical support and partnership), and wider exploitation of vulnerable persons. The team will provide a dedicated resource, with training and knowledge in these areas, to protect vulnerable people from harm, increase prosecution rates and increase opportunities to dismantle harmful organised criminal groups.

The team will develop intelligence leads to establish pro-active operations in exploitation investigations, to disrupt and prosecute perpetrators whilst engaging with, and supporting, the victims of these crimes through the criminal justice system. This will be achieved by specialist knowledge of exploitation investigations, tactics and the continuity in victim support, and utilising the specialist skills of our local authority, other agencies and voluntary groups where necessary.

The Exploitation and Missing Team will cover the whole force area, with two teams primarily covering respected local authority areas, but flexibility to join and support each other. Where operationally possible to co-locate with Local Authority*.

The team will work Monday to Friday between 0800 and 1600 – with an expectation that staff will be flexible and adapt shifts to meet business demand as necessary.

The main responsibilities for the Team will be:

- Proactive / intelligence led investigations targeting Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE), Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), Adult Sexual Exploitation (ASE) and Modern Slavery Human Trafficking (MS/HT) perpetrators or locations where meaningful intervention / disruption can take place (overseen by Force tasking).

- Investigations will routinely be tasked where there is intelligence to indicate that there are multiple victims or multiple offenders.

- The Exploitation and Missing Team will not routinely investigate “county lines” but may provide support to other investigators and deal with certain elements of wider offending through negotiation.

- To support investigations for those children identified / flagged as “at risk of CE”. This may include victim engagement and partnership support. The Exploitation and Missing Team may take ownership of other investigations by negotiation.

- To undertake reactive ASE investigations where identified sex workers are the victim and the offence relates to their sex working providing there is victim engagement.

- To work with partners to attend professional’s meetings and strategy discussions regarding children and adults identified as being at risk of criminal exploitation.

- To actively support disruptive tactics by use of civil orders and powers provided to other agencies or partners.

- To support missing person investigations through monitoring and quality assurance, liaison and partnership working, information sharing, intelligence development and CPT support.

- To provide specialist guidance and support to departments within Wiltshire Police and other agencies on exploitation related investigations and associated victim safeguarding matters including the National Referral Mechanism (NRM).

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Appendix 1: **KEY DEFINITIONS**

A Child

A child is defined by the Children Acts 1989 and 2004 respectively; a child is anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday. The term child is used therefore to include children and young people.

Under some legislation, however the age is lower, for example under [section 1](#) of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933 the age of the child is under 16 years. Unless specific legislation indicates otherwise this policy will refer to children under the age of 18 years.

The fact that a child has reached 16 years of age, is living independently; is looked after or is in further education, is a member of the armed forces is in hospital or in custody, does not change his or her entitlement to services or protection.

Child Abuse

This is defined as any form of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm on them, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting by those known to them or by others (eg, via the internet). They may be abused by an adult or adults, or by another child or children.

Concern about child abuse is one aspect of safeguarding children. The term child abuse includes physical, sexual or emotional abuse, or neglect of a child.

It does not include straightforward property offences where the child is a victim (eg, theft of a mobile phone). However, the police have an important role where there are concerns for children which do not involve criminal offences. That role generally includes active involvement in strategic partnerships relating to safeguarding children, and action at an operational level which includes referring any concerns to other agencies for information and/or action.

Child abuse can also include offences relating to human trafficking and child sexual exploitation. In most occurrences of child abuse, however, the perpetrator is likely to be a family member or someone known to the child. In some cases children may not understand that they are being abused. The complex dynamics of abuse mean that some individuals develop an attachment to the person harming them. This can sometimes make identifying abuse difficult and result in the victim playing down and/or denying the abuse.

Child Protection

Where there is a risk that a child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm, in accordance with the Children Act 1989 [section 47](#), or is a 'child in need' as defined in the Children Act 1989 [section 17\(10\)](#), the police are responsible for taking whatever action is required. This includes referring details about the child to children's social care. In all aspects of the police response to concern for a child, including where there are suspicions of child abuse (eg, as part of a criminal investigation), the key principles are the welfare and best interests of the child. This applies regardless of the environment in which the abuse occurs (eg, family, institution or online) and the context or crime type (eg, prostituting or trafficking a child).

Concerns about criminal offences relating to child abuse which come from police staff, other agencies or members of the public should be the focus of child abuse investigation units or equivalent police structures.

Significant Harm

The Children Act 1989 introduced the concept of significant harm in order to assess the need for compulsory intervention in family life in the best interests of children. Under [section 47](#) of the Act, the local authority has a duty to make enquiries, or cause enquiries to be made, where it reasonably suspects that a child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm. The enquiries should enable the local authority to decide whether they should take action to safeguard the child and promote the child's welfare.

There are no absolute legally or medically defined criteria on which to rely when judging what constitutes significant harm, although HM Government (2018) Working Together to Safeguard Children and Welsh Assembly Government (n.d.) Safeguarding Children: Working Together Under the Children Act 2004 contain more detailed guidance about establishing significant harm.

Sometimes a single, traumatic event may constitute significant harm, eg, a violent assault, suffocation or poisoning. More often, however, there is an accumulation of events which together constitute significant harm, but alone may appear unimportant.

Some children live in family and social circumstances where their health and development are neglected. For these children, it is the corrosiveness of long-term emotional, physical or sexual abuse that causes impairment to the extent of constituting significant harm.

The Children Act 1989 [section 31\(9\) and \(10\)](#) (as amended) gives the following definition of harm:

- 'harm' means ill-treatment or the impairment of health or development including, for example, impairment suffered from seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another
- 'development' means physical, intellectual, emotional, social or behavioural development
- 'health' means physical or mental health
- 'ill-treatment' includes sexual abuse and forms of ill-treatment which are not physical.

In determining whether the harm is significant, forces should compare the child's health and development with the health and development reasonably expected of a similar child.

Although the Children Act 1989 [section 31](#) relates specifically to court orders, for the sake of consistency the extended definition should be applied throughout.

Child in Need

Where significant harm or its likelihood is not apparent, the local Authority may still have a duty under [section 17](#) of the Children Act 1989 to safeguard and promote the welfare of that child by providing a range and level of services. Early Interventions and support for a child in need can help to avert escalation to the point where a family is in crisis.

Any child identified as a child in need should be referred to the Child Protection team who will then refer this matter to Local Authority Children's services to ensure that action is taken to safeguard that child.

Physical Abuse

This is the non-accidental infliction of physical force by one person on another, which may or may not result in physical injury. Physical abuse can involve the following:

- hitting
- shaking
- throwing
- poisoning
- burning or scalding
- drowning
- suffocating

-
- choking
 - slapping
 - pushing
 - kicking
 - misusing medication
 - inappropriate restraint or false imprisonment.

This list is not exhaustive and the injury may not be external or immediately noticeable. Harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates or induces illness, or deliberately causes ill health to a child in their care.

[Section 58](#) of the Children Act 2004 and the amended CPS charging standard means that for any injury to a child (a person less than 16 years of age) caused by a parent or person acting in loco parentis which amounts to more than a temporary reddening of the skin and where the injury is more than transient and trifling, the defence of reasonable punishment is not available. Therefore, any injury sustained by a child which is serious enough to warrant a charge of assault occasioning actual bodily harm cannot be considered to be as the result of reasonable punishment.

Emotional Abuse

This is the persistent, emotional maltreatment of a child to an extent which causes severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve:

- conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person.
- not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or making fun of what they say or how they communicate.
- imposing age or developmentally inappropriate expectations on a child (eg, interactions that are beyond a child's developmental capability)
- overprotecting and limiting exploration and learning, or preventing the child from participating in normal social interaction
- seeing and/or hearing the ill-treatment of another
- bullying (including cyber bullying).

Sexual Abuse

This is forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities. They may not necessarily involve a high level of violence and the child may or may not be aware of what is happening. The activities may include physical contact, such as assault by penetration (eg, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts (eg, masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside clothing).

They may also include non-contact activities, for example:

- involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images
- involving children in watching sexual activities
- encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways
- grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet).

Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult men. Women may also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

Neglect

Neglect is the failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. The offence is committed if a parent, legal guardian or other person legally liable to maintain a child or young person has wilfully neglected the child in a manner likely to cause injury to the child's mental or physical health if they have failed to

provide adequate food, clothing, medical aid or lodgings. This includes failure to take such reasonable steps as to procure these items.

Neglect also includes failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger, the failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment and the neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

For criminal neglect, there must be evidence that it was 'wilful', which in this context means deliberate or reckless. Although there is no definable threshold for when a minor neglectful act becomes a criminal offence, each single incident must be examined in the context of other acts or omissions and the possibility of a criminal offence should be considered. There will be occasions when the issue is one of poor parenting and/or lack of knowledge of the carer rather than a deliberate and wilful act.

Child Cruelty

The offence of cruelty to persons under 16 years incorporates neglect, as set out in the Children and Young Persons Act 1933 [section 1\(1\)](#). Under the Act, if anyone who is 16 years or over wilfully assaults, ill-treats, whether physically or otherwise, neglects, abandons, or exposes a child, or procures a child to be assaulted, ill-treated, whether physically or otherwise, neglected, abandoned, or exposed, in a manner likely to cause unnecessary suffering or injury to health, whether the suffering or injury is of a physical or psychological nature, they are guilty of an offence.

There is no statutory definition of wilfully, but the term has been interpreted by the courts. In [Attorney General's Reference No 3 of 2003 \[2005\] 1 Q.B. 73](#) it was said that wilful misconduct means, 'deliberately doing something which is wrong, knowing it to be wrong or with reckless indifference as to whether it is wrong or not'. Although there is no definable threshold for when a minor neglectful act becomes a criminal offence, each single incident must be examined in the context of other acts or omissions and the possibility of a criminal offence should be considered. See definition of 'reckless' in [R v G \[2004\] 1 AC 1034](#).

There will be occasions when the issue is one of poor parenting and/or the carer's lack of knowledge, rather than a deliberate and wilful act. The decision to record wilful neglect as a crime should be made in light of all available evidence and information. If, on the balance of probabilities, it is more likely than not that the incident is the result of a criminal act, a crime should be recorded in accordance with Home Office (2011) The National Crime Recording Standard (NCRS): What you need to know.

Where the report is not initially recorded as a crime (because it does not meet the NCRS criteria for recording), an incident report should be recorded in accordance with the national guidance. Where a prosecution does not result from the investigation, any records and other relevant information should be retained as these may assist any future investigation and provide evidence to support a future prosecution

Children with Disabilities

Any child with a disability is by definition a 'child in need' under s17 of the Children Act 1989. The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 makes it unlawful to discriminate against a disabled person in relation to the provision of services. This includes making a service more difficult for a disabled person to access or providing them with a different standard of service.

Research suggests that children with a disability may be generally more vulnerable to significant harm through physical, abuse and / or neglect than children who do not have a disability.

Abuse and Offending by Children

When children are reported to be abusing others or offending in other ways, or involved in substance abuse, for example, abusing drugs or alcohol, this should be recognised as a possible indicator that they are or have been a victim of child abuse.

Sexual offending by children, even if relatively minor (eg, exposure) may escalate to more serious sexual offending. This should be referred to Children's Social Care so that issues can be dealt with at an early stage. The evidence suggests that children who sexually harm may have suffered considerable disruption in their lives, have poor attachments, been exposed to violence within the family, may have witnessed or been subject to physical or sexual abuse, have problems in their educational development, and may have committed other offences.

Such children and young people are likely to be children in need, and some will in addition be suffering or at risk of significant harm and may themselves be in need of protection.

It is therefore important that when a child comes to the notice of Police a PPN is completed and sent to MASH for their consideration.

Lawful Chastisement

[Section 58](#) Children Act 2004 removes the availability of the reasonable chastisement defence for parents or adults acting in loco parentis where the accused is charged with wounding, causing grievous bodily harm, assault occasioning actual bodily harm or cruelty to persons less than 16 years of age. However, the defence remains available for parents and adults acting in loco parentis charged with common assault under [section 39](#) Criminal Justice Act 1988.

Domestic Abuse

Domestic Abuse is a primary risk indicator of child protection concerns. There are significant links between Domestic Abuse and Child Abuse.

Through timely information sharing and early identification of families affected by domestic violence, we can provide an effective multi- agency approach for the protection of those children.

We will recognise the plight of victims and their children and offer them the protection and support they deserve whilst seeking to challenge offenders, holding them accountable throughout the criminal justice process.

Decisions will not be made on the basis of stereotypes and we will regard victims of domestic violence or abuse as victims of crime who need protecting. We will not assume that victims will later withdraw their complaint, if appropriate, we will attempt to pursue evidence led prosecutions.

Wiltshire Police will ensure that positive action is taken at all Domestic Abuse incidents to protect victims and children and challenge offenders.

For further information please refer to the [Domestic Abuse Policy and Procedure](#).

Children left alone

In cases where children are left alone, the law does not particularly specify an age when this would be considered acceptable. This is, in part, in recognition that all children are different and demonstrate different levels of maturity and responsibility.

The Children and Young Persons Act 1933 ([section 1](#)) does state however that those parents can be prosecuted for wilful neglect if they leave a child under 16 unsupervised 'in a manner likely to cause unnecessary suffering or injury to health'.

In any situation where a child is left alone, consideration should be given to the circumstances and context (e.g. the ages, needs and maturity of the children, the length of time involved, the frequency of such incidents, the safety of the location and any other relevant factors).

The law also does not state an age when a young person can baby-sit. However, where a baby-sitter is under the age of 16 years, parents remain legally responsible to ensure that their child comes to no harm.

Child Abduction

It is a criminal offence under [section 1](#) the Child Abduction Act 1984 for a person connected with a child under the age of 16 to take or send that child out of the UK without the appropriate consent. It is also an offence under [section 2](#) the Act for a person not connected with the child, without lawful authority or reasonable excuse, to take or detain a child under the age of 16, or to remove or keep that child from lawful control.

Parental Responsibility

Parental responsibility under [section 3](#) of the Children Act 1989 means all rights, duties, powers, responsibilities and authority which by law a parent has in relation to their child and his or her property.

The following can hold parental responsibility:

- Natural mother
- Natural father if married to the natural mother at the time of the birth or if he subsequently marries the mother
- Natural father if he has a written agreement with the mother
- A person having parental responsibility through a court order
- An unmarried father if he acts with the mother to have his name recorded on the child's birth registration certificate (only in the case of children born after 1 December 2003)
- Local Authority Children's Services if granted by the courts.

Establishing Parental Responsibility

Officers conducting an investigation should consider the legal status of those responsible for a child to ensure that the child is protected from harm. To establish parental responsibility, officers should determine:

- Legal status of all parents
- Whether the child is looked after by the local authority
- Whether any court orders are in force that may affect parental responsibility, e.g., court orders relating to child contact.

Police Protection Powers do not give the police parental responsibility.

Under [section 20](#) of the Children Act 1989 updated by the Adoption and Children Act 2002, children and young people can be 'accommodated' by the local Authority with the consent of those with parental responsibility. This is based on an agreement between the local authority and the parents. The parents sign a written document agreeing to accommodation they also consent to allow the local authority to make decisions regarding medical assessment and treatment for the best interests of the child.

[Section 20](#) does not give the local authority parental responsibility this remains with the parents and parents and can withdraw that consent at any time.

Grooming/ Sexting

Grooming is the process of reducing the resistance of a child or their parent or carer to abuse. This may be achieved through increasing a child's, parent's or carer's fear of what might happen should they report the abuse as well as inducing them to believe that the abuse is acceptable.

Grooming may be achieved through personal contact with the child or the parent or carer or through other means of communication such as the internet. The Sexual Offences Act 2003 has introduced specific criminal offences that relate to the practice of grooming and the making of arrangements to commit a child sex offence.

"Sexting" is a term to describe the use of technology to create and share personal sexual content. The content may vary, from text message to images or partial nudity to sexual images or videos. This activity may constitute an indecent image offence and be illegal under the Protection of Children Act 1978 and Criminal Justice Act 1998.

Most offences involving sexual activity with children will require a full criminal investigative response, for example in the presence of exploitation, coercion, a profit motive or adults as perpetrators. Offences involving self-generated images or images obtained with consent by other children may be dealt with differently.

See [Youth Generated Images \(Sexting\) Procedure](#) for further details.

Child Sexual Exploitation

Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator.

Violence, coercion and intimidation are common, involvement in exploitative relationships being characterised in the main by the child or young person's limited availability of choice resulting from their social/economic and/or emotional vulnerability.

There is no one way that CSE is perpetrated, Grooming is common in some forms of CSE including online, but it is not always present. Online and offline (contact) exploitation can overlap. That children and young people may appear to co-operate cannot be taken as consent: they are legally minors and subject to many forms of coercion and control. These abuses of power are similar to those which are recognised in domestic violence.

A child or young person who is suspected of suffering or being at risk of suffering sexual exploitation will by definition be a child who may be in need under the Children Act 1989. All references to a child or young person mean those under the age of 18, as defined in the Children Acts 1989 & 2004 and equally applies to both males and females alike

Trafficking of Children

Child trafficking is defined as, the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for the purposes of exploitation. All child victims are entitled to the same level of protection and care regardless of their immigration status.

Children are trafficked for a number of reasons, including sexual exploitation, domestic servitude, labour, benefit fraud and involvement in criminal activity, such as pick pocketing and theft. Not all cases of trafficking are international a child can be trafficked from one town or location to another.

Child Abuse Images and Internet Paedophilia and Ephebophilia

Under the Protection of Children Act 1978 (as amended by Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 and the Sexual Offences Act 2003) there are a number of offences which are associated with indecent images of children. (IIOC) The definition of an indecent photograph is an indecent film, copy of an indecent photograph or film and an indecent photograph comprised in a film.

The Act defines a copy to include negatives, a computer disc or any form of electronic means that can be converted into a photograph and defines a film as any form of video.

The Criminal Justice and Immigration Act 2008 further extended the definition to include tracings and images which are not itself a photograph or pseudo photograph but is derived from a whole or part of a photograph or pseudo photograph and data stored on a computer disc or by any other electronic means which is then capable of conversion into an image.

It is important when investigating any allegation of Internet Paedophilia or IIOC to consider if there are any immediate Safeguarding children issues requiring interventions, therefore advice and support should be sought from Child Abuse Investigation Team (CIET), or out of hour's line supervision. The High Tech Crime Unit is also available for practical advice and guidance.

All Child Exploitation and Online Protection Command (CEOP) Indecent images investigations packages received will be initially recorded onto NICHE before following the CIET Crime Recoding and Research Flowchart, that sees jobs triaged and risk assessed at various points. If a suspect is identified as having access to children, this must be immediately raised with supervisors within CIET who will ensure the case is risk assessed using the Kent Internet Risk Assessment Tool (KIRAT) and a referral is made through MASH. If a report is based on offensive or unlawful communication between the child and another person, via the internet, the caller should be advised not to go online or use the computer until it has been examined for evidence collection.

Missing Children

Children who go missing may be at risk while missing and may have run away to escape abuse. It should be a consideration that the child could have gone missing to escape abuse within their home environment. Before missing children are returned, enquiries should be made to discover the reasons for their disappearance via the safe and well check. These enquiries can often result in further highlighted concerns about the child which require multi agency interventions.

Children Missing from Education (CME)

If a child is receiving education they have the opportunity to fulfil their potential, they are safeguarded and in an environment which promotes their welfare. If a child is missing from education they could be at risk of significant harm. Every local authority has a CME named point of contact.

Forced Marriage and Honour Based Violence

A forced marriage is a marriage conducted without the full and free consent of both parties. It should not be confused with an arranged marriage, which has the consent of both parties.

Children (female and male) can be subjected to forced marriages both in this country and abroad. In forced marriages, family members or spouses may perpetrate abuse, either by forcing the victim into the marriage or by abusing them after the marriage.

A child who is being forced into marriage is at risk of significant harm through physical, sexual and emotional abuse. Although the term 'Honour based abuse' is commonly used, there is no honour or legal based defence for this abuse.

It can often be distinguished between other forms of violence as it is often committed with some degree of approval/ and or collusion from family or other community members. This should always be taken into consideration when making Safeguarding Decisions.

Professionals should respond in a similar way to forced marriage as with domestic violence and honour based violence (i.e. in facilitating disclosure, developing individual safety plans, ensuring the child's safety by according them confidentiality in relation to the rest of the family, completing individual risk assessments.

Female Genital Mutilation

Female genital mutilation (FGM) is collective term for procedures which include the removal of part or all of the external female genitalia, for cultural or other non – therapeutic reasons.

The practice is medically unnecessary, extremely painful and has serious health consequences, both at the time the mutilation is carried out and in later life. The procedure is typically performed on girls between the age of four and thirteen, but in some cases FGM is performed on new born infants or on young woman before marriage or pregnancy. This procedure has in some cases caused death from blood loss or infection, either following the procedure or in subsequent child birth.

FGM is illegal in the UK and is a clear and severe form of child abuse and violence against women. Professionals should intervene to safeguard girls and protect women who may be at risk of FGM or have been affected by it.

The Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 made it illegal to take any female (who is a UK national or permanent resident) out of the UK for the purpose of FGM, or for any UK national or permanent resident to have any involvement in the performance or facilitation of FGM anywhere in the world.

In addition to the legislation specifically criminalising FGM, professionals must abide by other relevant laws such as the Children Act 2004 and Article 3 of the Human Rights Act which specifies that no one will be subjected to torture or inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. The UN convention on the rights of a child states that any person below the age of 18 has the right to protection from activities or events that may cause harm and they need special safeguards and care and appropriate legal protection.

Any reported incident or suspected incident involving a child should be immediately forwarded to the Child Protection Team. Should this occur outside core hours then the duty Inspector should liaise with the Social Care emergency duty team and ensure appropriate protection measures are put in place.

Should there be an immediate risk to a child then consideration should be given to Police Protection Powers.

Pregnancy of a Child

Allegations of sexual activity with a child should be considered for a child abuse investigation even when the child claims to be consenting. The pregnancy of a child under 16 years of age can often provide evidence in a criminal investigation.

In some cases the effects of the abuse may mean that the child does not realise that they are being abused, which results in them minimising or denying the abuse.

A child's right to a private life and the claim they were consenting does not affect the duties of agencies to jointly consider the possibility that child may be suffering significant harm. This duty includes taking the appropriate action to assess risk and to protect that child.

Sudden and Unexpected death in Childhood.

A sudden or unexpected death is defined as the death of a child, in any setting, that was not anticipated as a significant possibility 24 hours before the death, or where there was a similarly unexpected collapse leading to or precipitating the events that led to the death. All sudden and unexpected deaths of infants or children under 2 years are termed as (SUDI). Sudden Unexpected Deaths in Childhood, aged 2 years to 18 years are termed as (SUDC). A rapid response will be initiated in every sudden and unexpected child death up to 18 years of age.

This response is an inter agency approach to obtaining the best evidence possible to understand how the child has died. It involves the early gathering of information, strategy meeting, review of body, home visit, post mortem examination, support to parents and a follow up strategy meeting.

Sudden deaths of, and serious injury to, all children under the age of 18 will be reported to the Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP) a sub group of the Local Safeguarding Children's Boards. CDOP reviews all the circumstances and events leading up to all child deaths.

Wiltshire Police have trained Officers on call who will attend all sudden deaths involving children.

Fabricated or Induced Illness.

The phenomenon of parents and carers inflicting harm upon children in their care by fabricating or inducing illness, and subsequently bringing this to the attention of medical practitioners for unnecessary investigation and treatment, is well documented.

There are examples of such harm being inflicted while the child is under medical supervision, including interference with intravenous lines, suffocation and deliberate poisoning. The focus must always remain on the child's physical and emotional health and welfare in the long and short term and the likelihood of that child suffering significant harm.

Child Homicides

Child Homicides should be investigated in accordance with ACPO 2006 Murder Investigation Manual.

This offence could be relevant when two or more carers are responsible for the death of a child but there is insufficient evidence to prosecute either one of them.

Historical Child Abuse

Allegations of child abuse are often made by adults and children a long time after the abuse has occurred, particularly when the abuser is known to them or is a family member. There are many reasons for not disclosing at the time which include fear of reprisals, the degree of grooming and control by the abuser, shame that the allegation might not be believed, and lack of insight to what constituted abuse.

There is no specific period of time which indicates that an allegation relates to historical child abuse although forces with generally work off a period where the report is made more than 28 days after the event.

The allegation may be triggered by the person becoming aware that the abuser is being investigated for a similar matter, or suspecting that the abuse is continuing against other children.

As soon as an allegation of historical abuse is received immediate consideration should be given of any current Safeguarding concerns e.g. does the alleged offender have continuing access to children.

Abuse Linked to a Belief in Spirit Possession

The term 'belief in spirit possession' is defined for the purposes of this guidance as the belief that an evil force has entered a child and is controlling him or her. Sometimes the term 'witch' is used and is defined here as the belief that a child is able to use an evil force to harm others. There is also a range of other language that is connected to such abuse.

This includes black magic, kindoki, ndoki, the evil eye, djinns, voodoo, obeah, demons, and child sorcerers. In all these cases, genuine beliefs can be held by families, carers, religious leaders, congregations, and the children themselves that evil forces are at work. Families and children can be deeply worried by the evil that they believe is threatening them, and abuse often occurs when an attempt is made to 'exorcise', or 'deliver' the child. Exorcism is defined here as attempting to expel evil spirits from a child. Child abuse linked to a belief in spirit possession sometimes stems from a child being used as an easy victim.

Whilst specific beliefs, practices, terms or forms of abuse may exist, the underlying reasons for the abuse are often similar to other contexts in which children become at risk of poor outcomes due to factors such as family stress, deprivation, domestic violence, substance abuse and or mental health problems. In addition, children who are different in some way, perhaps because they have a disability, an illness, learning needs, or are exceptionally bright, might be targeted in this kind of abuse.

In some cases, there will be no obvious difference and the child will have been targeted because they will have been perceived to be 'spiritually' different. The number of identified cases of such abuse is small but where it occurs the impact on the child is great, causing much distress and harm to the child.

Institutional Abuse and Abuse of Children Living Away from Home

Children living away from home, including foster care, residential care, private fostering, health settings, residential schools, prisons, young offender institutions and secure units may be particularly vulnerable to child abuse.

All allegations will be reported to the Designated Officer whose role it is to monitor each allegation against those professionals and ensure that each organisation is conducting an appropriate, proportionate and thorough investigation.

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Diversity Impact Assessment:

Has a DIA been completed? If no, please indicate the date by which it will be completed. If yes, please send a copy of the DIA with the procedure to the Force Policy Officer.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Date:
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Consultation:

List below who you have consulted with on this procedure (incl. committees, groups, etc):

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Implications of the Procedure:

Training Requirements

No additional training required.

IT Infrastructure

No additional IT infrastructure required