



CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

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Policy Statement

The abuse and exploitation of children accounts for some of the most serious crimes dealt with by the police. This policy and procedure aim to safeguard children by providing clear direction to all staff, including working with partners. Successful joint working to safeguard children requires the coordination of all agencies and professionals who have different roles, skills and expertise and who may also be located in different geographical areas.

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Aims

- Promote an ethos which places the child at the centre of the investigation, with outcomes focused on the best interests of the child rather than criminal justice processes and outcomes.
- Contribute to the safeguarding of all children at risk of abuse, neglect or exploitation by working jointly with partners, sharing information, identifying risk and complying with statutory guidance [Working Together to Safeguard Children](#)¹.
- Ensure that whilst investigating and policing cases of child abuse and exploitation, the welfare of the child is paramount.
- Promote compliance with the [Victims' Code](#), ensuring that all applicable rights are delivered to victims.
- Adopt a 4 P approach (pursue, prevent, protect, prepare) to safeguarding and managing current victims and to prevent further victims of child abuse, neglect and exploitation.
- Provide clear instructions, guidance and training to all staff in order for them to recognise when children are at risk of harm, neglect or exploitation and to identify appropriate responses.
- Ensure a thorough investigation of all cases of child abuse, neglect and exploitation, taking positive action against offenders and holding them accountable through the criminal justice system.
- Take a proactive approach, together with other agencies, in preventing and reducing child abuse, neglect and exploitation, including enforcement and disruption activity against offenders.
- Use current best practice guidance and academic research to understand and respond to the threats posed to children.
- Use appropriate language² when referring to children at risk of exploitation, recognising that language which implies that a child is complicit or in some way responsible must not be used.

Scope

This policy and the procedure apply to all police officers, staff and volunteers in Staffordshire.

Terms and Definitions

Definition of a child

Any person under the age of 18 years. Apart from specific offences that only apply to younger children (e.g., offence of cruelty under the Children and Young Person Act 1933 which applies to children under 16 years). The term child is used in this document to refer to someone under the age of 18 years.

The following factors do not change a child's status or entitlement to services or protection: reaching 16 years of age, living independently, being in further education, looked after, a member of the armed forces, in hospital or custody in a secure estate.

Child abuse including exploitation

In this policy, the term child abuse includes behaviour relating to physical, sexual or emotional abuse or neglect of a child. It does not include all offences where the victim is a child.

Whilst many examples of child abuse involve criminal offences, this document acknowledges that the police also have an important role in relation to concerns for children that may not involve criminal offences. At an operational level, this includes signposting and/or referring such concerns to other agencies for action and information. At a strategic level, it involves active engagement in the CSPR.

Someone may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family, institutional or community setting. In most cases, the perpetrator is likely to be a family member or known to the child. Sometimes the child will not understand they are being abused and may have developed an attachment to the abuser which can be challenging to identify, investigate and prevent the abuse.

Physical abuse

Non-accidental infliction of physical force, which may or may not result in visible or physical injury. It is not accidental: children who are physically abused suffer violence such as being hit, kicked, poisoned, burned, drowning, choked, pushed, slapped or having objects thrown at them. It includes misuse of medication, inappropriate restraint or false imprisonment. Injuries can include bruises, broken bones, burns, scalds or cuts.

Injuries to very young children, especially non-verbalising children or non-mobile babies, should always be considered as very serious. Always consider how the child could have sustained such injuries. Shaking or hitting babies can cause non-accidental head injuries, sometimes referred to as abusive head trauma or 'shaken baby syndrome.'

Fabricated or induced illness (FII) is a rare form of child abuse. It happens when a parent or carer exaggerates or deliberately causes symptoms of illness in the child and tries to convince doctors that the child is ill, or that their condition is worse than it really is. The parent/carer does not always intend to deceive doctors, but their behaviour is likely to harm the child, such as unnecessary treatment or tests, disrupted education due to believing they are ill.

There is no excuse for physically abusing a child. It causes serious and often long-lasting harm and in severe cases, death.

Emotional abuse

The persistent, emotional maltreatment of a child to an extent which causes severe and persistent adverse effects on their emotional development. Children who are emotionally abused are sometimes suffering other forms of abuse or neglect at the same time.

There can be many reasons for it. High stress and tension in the lives of parents and carers can impact on their ability to provide emotional love and support. It can have a severe and persistent adverse effect on the child's emotional development, although these effects are often silent. Verbal and psychological wounds leave a child forever changed. Emotional child abuse is the most difficult form of maltreatment to identify and stop. It may involve:

- Convincing a child that they are worthless, unloved and inadequate.
- 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.

- Overprotection and limiting exploration and learning or preventing the child from participating in normal social interactions.
- Seeing and/or hearing the ill-treatment of another.
- Bullying, including cyber bullying.

The Adoption and Children Act 2002 extended the definition of significant harm to include 'impairment suffered from seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another'. This includes the significant impact of witnessing domestic violence.

Investigate offences under the offence of cruelty to persons under 16 years, which incorporates neglect, as set out in the Children and Young Persons Act 1933.

Sexual abuse

Forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities. This may not involve a high level of violence and the child may not be aware of what is happening. Activities may include:

- Physical contact, such as assault by penetration (e.g., rape or oral sex).
- Non-penetrative acts e.g., masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside clothing.
- Non-contact activities e.g., involving children in looking at or producing sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways and grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet).

Sexual abuse is perpetrated by men, women and children. Sexual abuse affects boys as well as girls. Some boys and young men face barriers to disclosing sexual abuse including discriminatory social attitudes, stereotypes and expectations of masculine behaviour.

Child sexual exploitation

CSE is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs 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 in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if sexual activity appears to be consensual. CSE does not always involve physical contact and can occur through the use of technology.

Like all forms of child sexual abuse, CSE:

- Affects anyone under the age of 18 years, including young people aged 16 or 17 who can legally consent to have sex.
- Is still sexual even if the sexual activity appears consensual.
- Includes contact (penetrative and non-penetrative acts) and non-contact sexual activity.
- Can take place in person, via technology or a combination of both.
- Can involve force and/or enticement-based methods of compliance, with or without violence or threats of violence.
- May occur without the child or young person's immediate knowledge (e.g., through others copying videos or images they have created and posting on social media).
- Can be perpetrated by individuals or groups, males or females, children or adults. It can be an isolated incident or series of incidents over time, from opportunistic to complex organised abuse.
- Is typified by some form of power imbalance. Whilst age may be the most obvious, other factors including gender, sexual identity, cognitive ability, physical strength, status and access to economic or other resources.

- CSE cases are complex, often lengthy, require detailed management and investigation strategies, alongside frequent consultation between the investigating officer and their supervisor.
- The most significant barrier to success is the lack of engagement from victims, and the investigation and prosecution process should form part of a wider strategy to:
- Identify instances of CSE.
- Assess and manage risk to children to prevent and/or reduce the impact of harm.
- Work with partners to support and protect child victims and their families.
- Develop intelligence to prevent incidents, support investigations and help partners to take positive action.
- Identify and record themes, patterns and trends.

Child criminal exploitation

CCE occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child under the age of 18 to undertake criminal acts. The victim may have been criminally exploited even if the activity appears consensual. CCE does not always involve physical contact and can occur through the use of technology.

CCE is broader than county lines, and includes forcing children to commit criminal offences such as theft and working in cannabis farms, alongside other forms of economic exploitation, such as where a child is paid to transfer money in and out of their own bank account to assist with money laundering. Any criminal offence can constitute child CCE.

Vulnerable children receive threats and may be under duress from the exploiter(s) but there is also evidence that they benefit financially from being linked to such criminality. These factors can make it difficult to engage with them and obtain disclosure.

CCE cases are complex, often lengthy and need detailed management and investigation strategies, alongside regular contact between the investigating officer and supervision. The most significant barrier to success is the non-engagement of the victim. Investigating officers should prepare and plan for an evidence-led prosecution from the outset.

Group-based offending

The Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) defined group-based offending as "**a network of two or more individuals (whether identified or not) who are known to (or associated with) one another and are known to be involved in or to facilitate the sexual exploitation of children and young people.**" Group-based offending is prevalent in both CSE and CCE but is often more obvious with child sexual exploitation. Group based offending can occur entirely online and not just in person via organised networks.

Refer to Staffordshire Police CE Policy and Op Hydrant for further details.

Intra-familial abuse

Intra-familial means within the family and extended family defined as aunts, uncles, cousins, siblings (including step, fostered, half-brother/sister), grandparents, step grandparents, step mothers/fathers and include long term partners (in an established relationship).

Neglect Neglect is 'the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical, emotional and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development'.

Consider neglect when there is evidence or suspicion that the child's basic needs are not adequately being met. Adequately means sufficient to avoid harm or the likelihood of significant

harm to children of any age. Indicators include access to food, shelter, clothing, warmth, safety, stimulation, protection, nurture, medical care (including dental), education, identity and play. In cases of neglect, it may initially be unclear whether any offence has been committed.

There is a risk of confusing different styles of care with actual standards of care. Styles of appropriate care vary widely, and are influenced by many factors including gender, class, culture and religion. Different styles of care would not be appropriate when they fail to address the child's needs and fall below an acceptable standard.

Research has identified that there is a link between family poverty, especially children living in deep poverty (50% below the poverty line) and inequality and child abuse/neglect.

What is the offence?

The offence of cruelty to persons under 16 years incorporates neglect. Under the Act, if anyone who is 16 years or over wilfully assaults, ill-treats, neglects, abandons or exposes a child, or procures a child to be assaulted, ill-treated, neglected, abandoned or exposed, in a manner likely to cause unnecessary suffering or injury to health, they are guilty of a misdemeanour. Injury to health includes any injury to, or loss of, sight, hearing, limb or organ of the body, and any mental derangement.

For an act to be wilful it must be intentional or reckless. During an investigation, including searching premises, medical examinations and interviews with victims, suspects and witnesses, consider the circumstances in which a child is cared and whether any neglect was wilful. Where there are two carers, consider arresting both and interviewing separately to avoid collusion. If it is not possible to prove which carer is responsible for the neglect, it may be that they were acting together (e.g., one inflicted harm and the other failed to prevent it or failed to seek medical assistance).

Considerations

- Failure to meet a child's needs does not necessarily mean that the parents/carers are intentionally neglectful but could point to the need for intervention.
- Neglect often occurs where parents/carers are dealing with a range of other problems such as substance misuse, mental ill-health, learning disability, domestic violence or lack of suitable accommodation.
- Neglect may be linked to parents/carers who retain cultural behaviours which are inappropriate to the context in which the family is living.
- Existing interventions from other agencies and timescales. Consider the cumulative impact of neglect, including previous incidents, rather than considering the most recent set of events in isolation.
- Although neglect can be difficult to prove to a criminal standard, it does not negate the need for immediate safeguarding and further investigation. Always involve partners in decision making to understand the chronology of any interventions and consider outcomes for the child.

Significant harm

The Children Act 1989 introduced the concept of significant harm to assess the need for compulsory intervention in family life in the best interests of children. Under Section 47, the local authority has a duty to make or ensure that enquiries are made where it reasonably suspects a child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm. This information is then used to decide whether they should take action to safeguard the child and promote their welfare.

There is no absolute definition or criteria on what constitutes significant harm. However, Working Together contains more detailed guidance on establishing significant harm.

Sometimes a single, traumatic event may constitute significant harm, such as a violent assault, suffocation or poisoning. However, more often 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 long-term emotional, physical or sexual abuse that causes impairment to the extent of constituting significant harm. The Children Act 1989 gives the following definition of harm:

- *harm* means ill-treatment or impairment of health or development including 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

This definition relates specifically to court orders. However, for consistency this definition should be applied to all child protection matters.

Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs)

ACEs are 'highly stressful and potentially traumatic events or situations that occur during childhood and/or adolescence. They can be a single event, or prolonged threats to, and breaches of, the young person's safety, security, trust or bodily integrity'¹⁰.

Examples include physical, sexual or emotional abuse; living with someone who abused drugs or alcohol; exposure to domestic violence; living with someone who has gone to prison; living with someone with serious mental illness, and losing a parent through divorce, death or abandonment.

Child in need

Under [Section 17](#) of the Children Act 1989, the local authority has a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in need. Such children are more likely to experience abuse or neglect, family dysfunction, have a disability or live in a family under acute stress.

Child in need (CIN) is a lower level of concern below the 'significant harm' threshold. However, this does not mean there is no risk; early intervention and support may avoid escalation to the point where a family is in crisis.

If a police officer suspects that a child is in any way at risk, take positive action to safeguard the child and share information with CSC via direct contact or recording concerns on a CAP.

Consider sharing information with the child's allocated social worker on any incidents involving the child so that they are aware of any police interventions.

Section 47 investigation

A [Section 47](#)¹¹ enquiry means that CSC must conduct an investigation when they have 'reasonable cause to suspect that a child who lives, or is found, in their area is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm'.

The enquiry assesses the child's needs and the ability of those caring for the child to meet them to decide whether any action should be taken to safeguard the child. The child's parents/carers will be interviewed, as well as the child (unless the child is too young). The assessment includes information from the child's school, doctor and other professionals.

Child protection conference

CSC may decide to hold an initial child protection conference if the Section 47 investigation decides that the child 'has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm'. This is a multi-agency meeting chaired by an independent social worker at a managerial level.

The purpose of the conference is to:

- Assess if the child is likely to suffer significant harm, which category of harm and whether the harm is due to the care they are receiving.
- Decide if the child needs a child protection plan.
- Devise an outline multi-agency protection plan.
- Allocate a CSC social worker and professionals from other agencies to work with the family to make and implement a plan.

All conference attendees receive minutes of the meeting; these are confidential and must be stored securely.

Parental responsibility

Investigating officers should consider the legal status of those responsible for a child. Parental responsibility¹² means all rights, duties, powers, responsibilities and authority which, by law, parents have in relation to their child and his or her property. Parental responsibility can be held by the following:

- Natural mother (automatically).
- Natural father if he is married to the natural mother or is listed on the birth certificate (after a certain date, depending on which part of the UK the child was born in).
- An unmarried father if he jointly registers the birth with the natural mother, or obtains a parental responsibility agreement with the mother which is signed and witnessed at the family court, or obtains a parental responsibility order from a court.
- Same-sex partners who were civil partners at the time of treatment.
- The second parent in non-civil partnerships if they apply for parental responsibility or make a parental responsibility agreement or jointly register the birth with the first parent.

Parental responsibility may also be affected if the child is looked after by the local authority or if any relevant court orders are in place. The local authority shares parental responsibility when the child is subject to a care order¹³.

Consult the child and seek their consent before an ABE interview. In some cases, the parent's consent is also desirable, but not essential. The relevant medical professional is responsible for establishing consent for a medical examination.

If a child is on an Emergency Protection Order (obtained by CSC) parental responsibility is shared with the parent and CSC.

Police protection powers (PPP)

Police protection is an emergency power which enables the police to protect a child who is reasonably believed to be at risk of significant harm.

Section 46 of the Children Act 1989 empowers an officer to remove a child to suitable accommodation or prevent the removal of a child from a hospital or other place in which that child

is being accommodated. When these powers are exercised, the child is considered to be in police protection.

Police protection should be used when potential victims are found in the company of potential perpetrators and they refuse to accompany the police voluntarily (for example, a 14-year-old child is found in the company of an adult at 2am).

PPP reviews

- When police protection powers are used, a review must be conducted by an inspector every 4 hours if the child is at a police station or 8 hours if the child is NOT at a police station, for the duration of the protection period. However, significant events might result in the need for an earlier review or the termination of PPP if the level of risk has changed or there is a need to change the place of suitable accommodation.
- All reviews must be documented on Niche:

Police protection does not give the police parental responsibility or allow the police to consent to a forensic medical examination on behalf of the child. No child may be kept in police protection for more than 72 hours.

Child death overview panel

A child death overview panel ensures that when a child under the age of 18 dies there is a comprehensive and independent review of the circumstances. The review focuses on identifying any learning and safeguarding concerns which contributes to a wider understanding of the causes, and reducing the risk, of child death.

Sudden unexpected deaths in children

Any unexpected child death must be treated initially as a multi-agency safeguarding investigation. The duty detective inspector must attend reports of any sudden unexpected deaths in children and take ownership of the investigation.

Following the initial response, the district CPIU will manage follow up enquiries, including dealing with siblings, attending multi-agency meetings and completing any other tasks. They will also sit on the Child Death Overview Panel.

For further information, refer to the [Sudden Unexpected Death in Childhood Protocol](#).

Rapid review

Under the Children Act 2004, if a local authority knows or suspects that a child has been abused or neglected, it must notify the child safeguarding practice review panel if:

- (a) the child dies or is seriously harmed in the local authority's area, or
- (b) while normally resident in the local authority's area, the child dies or is seriously harmed outside England.

The [rapid review](#) will gather facts, identify immediate learning or action and determine whether a local child safeguarding panel review is appropriate.

Child safeguarding practice review

When a child dies, or is seriously harmed, as a result of abuse or neglect, a case review is conducted to identify how local professionals and organisations can improve the way they work together to safeguard children.

Victim personal statement

All victims have the right to make a **victim personal statement** (VPS) where they can explain, in their own words, how a crime has affected them physically, emotionally, financially or in any other way. It also helps agencies understand the impact of the crime so that they can make informed decisions about the case.

Victims must be provided with information about the VPS process and support to produce one. However, the VPS should not contain any opinions on sentencing. A judge or magistrate will consider the VPS when passing sentence and the Parole Board will also consider it.

The parent/carer of a victim under the age of 18 is entitled to make a VPS if it is not in the best interests of the child to do so. However, if the young person is considered competent, then they should be allowed to provide a VPS at the discretion of the police.

Under the **Victims' Code**, a victim can request to read out or ask someone else to do so (usually the prosecutor), their VPS in court after the defendant is convicted. The court will decide how this proceeds.

Operation Encompass

Operation Encompass is a statutory process that connects police with schools to ensure better outcomes for children who are subject or witness to police-attended incidents of DA. When completing the PPN, information is automatically shared with the child's school. Police forces must share Encompass notifications with schools to ensure that those in educational services can monitor and intervene to help children who have witnessed DA where appropriate. For further advice, refer to www.operationencompass.org

Staffordshire's OP ENCOMPASS is being drafted and will be published in due course.

Unaccompanied child refugees

Children seeking asylum are at increased risk of neglect. Children travelling to the UK alone face harassment, abuse and criminalisation as a result of being wrongly treated as adults as a result of being placed in accommodation with adult strangers. **Operation Innerste** outlines the role of the police in the initial safeguarding of unaccompanied child migrants.

Medical advice and forensic examination

- At the initial strategy meeting, discuss the need for a forensic medical examination. Seek advice from a forensic physician, who should attend the strategy meeting if possible.
- Only conduct a forensic medical examination with the child's consent, if they have capacity, or consent from a parent, carer or person with parental responsibility.
- Consider consent early in an investigation, especially if the parent or carer is a suspect.
- If consent is refused, the local authority can apply for an Emergency Protection Order or Interim Care Order. In such cases, the officer arranging the examination should ask to see a copy of the order and its contents. The forensic physician or paediatrician should also satisfy themselves that consent has been obtained.
- Keep a timed record of all decisions and procedures undertaken to secure consent.

Risk and referrals

Concerns about children Police officers and staff have a duty to recognise and respond to all concerns for a child's welfare. If an officer has concerns, the relevant incident should be endorsed with the appropriate code and A PPN completed. The PPN is risk assessment, and a place to record all of the information you gather about a child when you are dealing with an incident. If you complete it well it should document all of your workings out, and help you to then risk assess effectively. A PPN must always be completed for every child brought into custody.

The PPN is NOT a referral form. Although it can be shared with other agencies if there is a need to do so, and could act as a good record and audit trail of the information you have shared with another agency. The police need to operate with the law to share information including for the purposes of trying to keep children safe. The police can share information about a person because we have concern for the welfare of a child, the 'lawful basis' will be 'Public Task: the processing is necessary for you to perform a task in the public interest or for your official functions, and the task or function has a clear basis in law'. You must be able to show that the sharing of the information is necessary to achieve your purpose, and only share the amount of information that is relevant i.e., you shouldn't just share all information that the police hold.

The PPN does not replace a call to Children's Social Care (CSC). It will always be best practise where you have any concerns for the welfare of a child to call CSC, or the Emergency Duty Team if out of hours. If you can engage with partner agencies upon initial attendance at the incident you will be able to use their information to help form your risk assessment. Please always make sure you record your conversation on the PPN, along with any course of action you have taken.

The contact details for Stoke Children's Social Care are;
Children's Advice and Duty Service 01782 235100

The contact details for Staffordshire's Children's Social Care are;
Staffordshire Children's Advice & Support Service 03001118007

Please store these numbers in your work device.

The information you gather will allow you to complete the risk assessment box towards the end of the form. Please apply the following;

High (Tier 3 & 4) This risk level has reached the statutory threshold for intervention and will always require a referral to the Local Authorities Children's Social Care	There are immediate concerns for the child(ren) - you'll need to record on the form what action you have taken to deal with the risk, who have you spoken to? any other agencies? have you used Police Protection Powers etc. Once you have identified a high-risk situation you must not delay in alerting Children's Social Care, best practise will always be making a call and discussing your concerns at the time. Record your conversation on the PPN.
Medium (Tier 2) Early Help	There are some concerns for the child's welfare and you think the child and/or their family would benefit from help and support. Record on the form if another agency is involved? who is the professional already supporting the family and do you know the contact details for them? Can you speak to them yourself to explain the further concern and share information? Are they asking for help and support? Onward referral to the most appropriate agency to offer support will be completed by the Harm Reduction Hub or the MASH depending on the circumstances.
Standard (Tier 1) Child's needs are met by the universal services already afforded to them.	If you are assessing the risk as standard this child does not need any additional help or support, their needs are being met by the universal services already around them i.e. school, GP etc.

There will be occasions when a PPN is NOT required; an example may be where police respond to a neighbour dispute over a trivial matter where children live at the address, or a person who lives next to a park but complains about the children playing football there. These are examples where the incident itself presents no concerns for the welfare of a child and therefore common sense lends itself to say that there would not be a requirement to complete a PPN for these types of incidents. That said if you attend an incident such as this and do come across a concern for the welfare of a child, of course there would be a requirement to complete a PPN.

If immediate CSC assistance is required, such as to 'place of safety' accommodation, inform a supervisor and the relevant CPU (for child protection including CSE) immediately. Where necessary, and out of duty hours, contact the Emergency Duty Team direct.

What happens to the PPN in the MASH?

The MASH reviews all PPN's where there is any level of concern for a child so it's really important that you have recorded everything you have already done. They will review the quality of the PPN you've completed and the action that you have taken, and then take any further action as required.

What happens to the PPN in the Harm Reduction Hub?

HRH staff work Monday to Friday. They work to the 'Four Pillar Approach'

As part of that work, they review all child PPN's. HRH's will review the content of the PPN and consider if further work is required. In some instances, the attending officer will have dealt appropriately with the incident, gathering previous police information and engaging with other agencies from the scene. In these cases, there may be nothing more for the HRHs to do but in other cases they will seek to reduce harm and ensure appropriate safeguarding measures are in place from a multi-agency perspective.

Powers of entry

When a concern has been expressed about a child, action must be taken to establish their welfare, including taking steps to see the child in person.

Consider a joint visit with CSC and, where necessary, use powers of arrest and [police protection powers](#). Obtain consent from the parent or carer if possible and consider the following legal bases if consent is refused:

- A constable may enter and search any premises for the purpose of arresting a person for an indictable offence which will include assaults occasioning actual or grievous bodily harm and sexual assault.
- A constable may enter and search premises for the purpose of saving life or limb or preventing serious damage to property (in the exercise of PPP if entry to premises is refused, this section may give adequate powers).
- Under Common Law, a constable has the power to enter premises to prevent or deal with a breach of the peace.
- A warrant can be obtained to search for children who may need emergency protection.
- Obtain a warrant to search for children needing emergency protection

Keep a record of all searches in accordance with PACE and PACE Codes of Practice.

Child abduction warning notices

Children and young people at risk of significant harm due to their association with others, who subsequently go missing, are vulnerable to abuse and exploitation, including CSE and CCE. However, it should be noted whilst missing episodes can be an indicator and risk factor, they are not the only concern.

Child abduction warning notices (CAWN) can provide evidence to support the prosecution of other criminal offences and civil proceedings and is therefore a valuable safeguarding measure. However, note that a CAWN must be issued correctly or its effectiveness, including use in court, will be affected.

For further information, refer to the [Vulnerability Toolkit](#)

Relevant legislation

- If the child is under 16 years, refer to the [Child Abduction Act 1984, Section 2](#).
- If the child is under 18 years and in local authority care, refer to the Children Act 1989, [Section 31](#) and [Section 49](#).

Identifying child exploitation

It is important to understand the risks of child exploitation. Offenders use different tactics to recruit and exploit children, including befriending them, threats or coercion. Recruitment takes place through face-to-face interactions, social media and popular culture. All children under the age of 18 can be subject to exploitation.

Exploited children rarely approach the police or social workers directly and disclose that they are being exploited. All partners therefore have a responsibility to identify children who are vulnerable or experiencing exploitation and share information that can assist with decision making.

Factors that can make children more vulnerable to exploitation:

- Having previously experienced neglect, physical and/or sexual abuse.
- Lack of a safe/stable home environment.
- Victim or witness to domestic abuse.
- Recent bereavement or loss.
- Social isolation or social difficulties.
- Economic vulnerability.
- Missing from home or care.
- Children not in education or employment.
- OCG association or criminality within the family.
- Intermittent drug usage or dependent on drugs and alcohol.
- Homelessness or insecure accommodation status.
- Pregnancy, termination, sexually transmitted diseases and mental health issues.
- Connections and relationships with other children who are being exploited.
- Having a physical or learning disability.
- Being in care (particularly residential care and children with interrupted care histories).
- Children who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or whose gender identity differs from the sex they were given at birth.

Online Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation (CSAE)

Online CSAE offending can take a number of different forms which include:

Online Grooming - The act of developing a relationship with a child to enable their abuse and exploitation both online and offline. Online platforms, such as social media, messaging and live streaming, can be used to facilitate this offending.

Live Streaming – Live streaming services can be used by Child Sex Offenders (CSOs) to incite victims to commit or watch sexual acts via webcam. CSOs also stream or watch live contact sexual abuse or indecent images of children with other offenders. In some instances, CSOs will pay facilitators to stream live contact abuse, with the offender directing what sexual acts are perpetrated against the victim.

Online coercion and blackmail – The coercion or blackmail of a child by technological means, using sexual images and/or videos depicting that child, for the purposes of sexual gain (e.g., to obtain new IIOC or bring about a sexual encounter), financial gain or other personal gain.

Possession, production and sharing of IIOC and Prohibited Images– CSOs can use online platforms to store and share IIOC and prohibited images. Online platforms can also be used to facilitate the production of IIOC, for example screen-recording of CSEA perpetrated over live streaming.

Indecent Images of Children (IIOC) are images of, or depicting, a child or part of a child which are judged to be in breach of recognised standards of propriety. Examples of images considered to be indecent are those depicting a child engaging in sexual activity or in a sexual manner, through posing, actions, clothing etc. IIOC includes photographs, videos, pseudo-photographs and tracings. Also, AI generated imagery.

Prohibited Images of Children are non-photographic images, for example CGI, cartoons etc, which portray a child engaging in sexual activity, a sexual act being performed in the presence of a child or focus on the child's genital or anal region.

For further information and guidance around online investigations, please refer to the POLIT (SOP) and/or seek guidance from the POLIT team.

Court orders

Modern Slavery Act 2015

[Section 2](#) introduces new criminal offences of human trafficking: trafficking in people, either into, within or out of the UK, for the purpose of exploitation. Under [Section 11](#), a court may order the forfeiture of any vehicle, ship or aircraft used or intended to be used for human trafficking.

Slavery and trafficking risk and prevention orders

These orders can be obtained by the police, National Crime Agency and immigration officers to prevent and prohibit convicted defendants from engaging in activities which enabled them to commit trafficking and slavery offences.

A slavery trafficking risk order (STRO) can be made by a court in respect of an individual who has not been convicted of a slavery or trafficking offence. The court must be satisfied that there is a risk that the defendant may commit a slavery or human trafficking offence and that the STRO is necessary to protect against the risk of harm. STROs enable action to be taken to prevent serious harm to the public, including in the absence of a conviction.

The STRO is obtained via an application to the Magistrate's Court and may impose any restriction necessary to protect the public from harm. This includes a requirement that the defendant provides their name and address if this changes, who to contact and how.

A slavery tracking prevention order (STPO) can be made on conviction or as a free-standing STPO on application. For the latter, the court must be satisfied that there is a risk that the defendant may commit another slavery or human trafficking offence and that the STPO is necessary to protect against the risk of harm from the defendant committing the offence.

Child Exploitation Disruption Toolkit – [LINK](#)

Further details of the below can be found by following the link to the [child exploitation disruption toolkit](#).

- Gang Injunctions
- Sexual Harm Prevention Orders
- Sexual Risk Orders
- Slavery and Trafficking Orders
- Slavery and Trafficking Prevention Orders
- Community Protection Orders
- Criminal Behaviour Orders
- Anti-Social Behaviour Orders

Community Protection Notice (CPN) or Criminal Behaviour Order (CBO)

A court may impose a civil injunction or CPN for reports of persistent anti-social behaviour from the police, a council or landlord or, CBO if convicted of a crime²¹. These can be used against an individual whose behaviour has caused harassment, alarm or distress such as preventing an individual from approaching girls in public places such as parks.

Closure Order

Used by the police to impose [closure notices](#) on premises which they have reasonable grounds to believe have been used in connection with the unlawful use, production or supply of a Class A controlled drug, and that the use of the premises is associated with the occurrence of disorder or serious nuisance to members of the public.

Closure orders may be useful to close premises known to be used for 'parties' where children are being sexually exploited and it can be shown that drugs are being supplied.

Dispersal powers

With the agreement of the local authority, a superintendent can issue an [order](#) for up to six months where members of the public are intimidated, harassed or alarmed by the presence of groups of people. Although intended to address anti-social behaviour, an application may address hot spot areas where young people gather and are targeted by perpetrators.

Civil injunctions

These can be actioned by the local authority to prevent an individual attending location such as schools or children's homes.

Risk assessment

When deciding if a child is the victim of abuse and at risk of further harm consider the following factors (this is not an exhaustive list).

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• physical injury• repeated presentation at hospital with unknown illnesses/injury• young age• disability• self-harm or threatens or attempts to commit suicide• evidence of sexual activity• social isolation and vulnerability<ul style="list-style-type: none">. regular missing from homeepisodes previous victim | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• history of violent or sexual offending• child abuse• domestic abuse• abuse of animals• grooming• failure to provide medical care for a child• failure to take responsibility for previous abuse• threats or attempts to commit suicide or self-harm• misuse of illegal or prescription drugs and/or alcohol• history of mental illness• access to children |
|--|--|

Talking to children (voice of the child and lived experience)

Listen to the child and take their views into account, including what the child does and does not say, how they look and behave, when making decisions. Record the conversation, timings, setting and persons present. This includes babies and very young children who are too young to speak but can display their emotions and wellbeing through their demeanour or behaviour.

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 to establish their welfare.

In cases where it is suspected that the adult who is present may have been involved in the abuse, ask to speak to the child separately:

- Use language appropriate to their age and development, understanding and preferred manner of communication. Refer to [APP investigating child and abuse and safeguarding children](#).
- Ask sufficient questions to establish whether a crime has been committed and the safety of all children in the home or who may come into contact with the suspect.
- Record questions and answers using the child's exact words as much as possible. If the child is volunteering information, do not stop them but do not question more than necessary.
- Avoid leading and suggestive questions.
- Use a British Sign Language interpreter and not a family member.
- Observe the physical and emotional condition of the child using body worn video to assist in any future enquiries or other reports of concern.
- Complete a PPN

Information

Record the following (this is not an exhaustive list):

- Child's name, gender and date of birth.
- Person(s) with parental responsibility and primary carer(s).
- Person(s) present when the child was spoken to.
- Questions asked of the child and their responses.
- Description of the child's physical appearance including injuries, clothing and state of cleanliness.
- Any action taken to observe the child's physical condition (noting that the examination does not allow full observation of the child's body and therefore any injury subsequently discovered but not accounted for can be explained).
- Child's demeanour and surroundings, including condition of the home
- Use AWARE to support your risk assessment;

A Appearance | Is the child wearing suitable clothing? Are they clean? Time/Day – should they be at school? Do they have expensive items with them – indicators of exploitation? Do they look tired? Frightened? Are they injured?

W Words, wishes and feelings | Will they engage with you? Are they too familiar? Very distrustful? Do they have low self-esteem or potential mental health issues? Are they calm? Angry? Matter-of-fact? Why might that be? Does their body language match their words? Are they guarded? Anxious? Secretive? Remember they may engage better with you away from others or by writing it down.

A Activity & behaviour | Is the child's reaction appropriate to what has happened? Are they highly distressed? Passive? Passivity may indicate it is a usual occurrence for the child. Are they hyper? Alert? Withdrawn?

R Relationships and dynamics | How has the parent/guardian reacted to police involvement? Try to observe interaction from parent and how it affects the child's attitude and demeanour. How has the child interacted? Are they dismissive? Angry? How is their eye contact and body language? How has the child interacted with police? Are they respectful? Aggressive? Dismissive? How is their eye contact and body language?

E Environment | What are their living conditions like? Check them! When did they last eat or drink? Is there evidence of drug or alcohol misuse by the child or parent? Do they express

concerns about going home? What will the consequence of police involvement be for them? What comments have they made about who lives there? Be curious!

An investigation team may need to interview a suspected child victim without the knowledge of the parent or carer in circumstances where:

- It is possible 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.

Abuse by professionals or people who work with children

'Position of trust' is a legal term that refers to certain roles and settings where an adult has regular and direct contact with children. Examples include teachers, care workers, youth justice workers, social workers, doctors, faith group leaders and sports coaches.

The Child Protection Sergeant is responsible for liaising with the relevant local authority designated officer (LADO) when there is an allegation about a person working with children, or a person whose day-to-day work brings them into contact with children (including police officers), where it has been alleged that they have behaved in way that has harmed or may harm a child; possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child, or otherwise behaved towards a child/ren in a way that indicates they may be unsuitable to work with children.

Inform parents or carers of any child involved about an allegation as soon as possible and update them on the progress of the case and outcome.

The LADO acts as a source of advice and may trigger additional action, such as a strategy meeting, to consider the needs of the child. The LADO role does not replace or interfere with the professional role and duty of the police to investigate allegations, or with disciplinary processes within individual organisations. All reports of professional abuse involving a child will be recorded as a crime if an offence is suggested, irrespective of any internal measures or strategies proposed by partner agencies.

Maintain confidentiality and guard against publicity where possible. Staffordshire Police will not normally identify a person under investigation although there may be exceptions such as tracing a subject. If such instances, consult partners and document the reasons for disclosure.

Acronyms

ABE	Achieving Best Evidence
ANO	Agency nominated officer
APP	Authorised Professional Practice
CAWN	Child abduction warning notice
CCE	Child criminal exploitation
CL	County lines
CPD	Continuous professional development
CPU	Child Protection Unit
CSC	Children's Social Care (local authority)
CSE	Child sexual exploitation

DA	Domestic Abuse
HOCR	Home Office Counting Rules
LADO	Local Authority Designated Officer
LSCP	Local Safeguarding Children Partnership
MDS	Modern day slavery
NDM	National Decision Model
NCRS	National Crime Recording Standard
NPCC	National Police Chiefs' Council
NRM	National Referral Mechanism (the framework for identifying and recording victims of human trafficking or modern slavery)
OCG	Organised crime group
PACE	Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984
PIP	Professionalising the investigation processes training
PNC	Police National Computer
PND	Police National Database
PPP	Police protection powers
PSD	Professional Standards Directorate
PPU	Public Protection Unit
RCRP	Right Care, Right Person
SARC	Sexual Assault Referral Centre
SCAIDP	Specialist Child Abuse Investigators Development Programme
SLT	Senior leadership team
STPO	Slavery trafficking prevention order
STRO	Slavery trafficking risk order

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