

	Warwickshire POLICE	POLICY
Security Classification	OFFICIAL	
Disclosable under Freedom of Information Act 2000	YES	

PROCEDURE TITLE	Child Protection- Vulnerability, Investigation and Safeguarding Policy
REFERENCE NUMBER	WP175
Version	1.0

PROCEDURE OWNERSHIP	
DIRECTORATE	PROTECTIVE SERVICES
BUSINESS AREA	VULNERABILITY & SAFEGUARDING

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NEXT REVIEW DATE:	March 2026
RISK RATING	MEDIUM
EQUALITY ANALYSIS	HIGH

Warwickshire Police welcome comments and suggestions from staff about the contents and implementation of this procedure. Please e-mail policiesandprocedures@warwickshire.police.uk

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1. POLICY OUTLINE

The ambition of Warwickshire Police is to be great at protecting the most vulnerable people from harm. The Fit for the Future Strategy 2020-2025 is on three pillars, Prevent and Protect, Respond and Reassure, Effective and Efficient

The requirement for action in child abuse cases creates obligations at every stage of the police response. These obligations apply when taking reports of concern for children, identifying concerns from being professionally curious and throughout the process of investigation. They also include the multi-agency response for safeguarding, and in particular, under section 11 of the Children Act 2004, a statutory obligation on the Police and Crime Commissioner and police service to safeguard children. A thorough investigation should be completed in all cases where concern for a child is recognised.

Officers and staff should ensure that their actions and decision making (including cases where action is not taken (as considered unnecessary or disproportionate)) are recorded in detail. An investigation into child abuse is a search for the truth and, from the outset, officers and staff should focus efforts on providing an evidence led, child centered approach to gathering evidence that proves or disproves the allegation and does not rely solely on the victim's or suspect's account.

Warwickshire Police use the vulnerability related risk framework to drive a risk aware and needs focused response; using professional curiosity to see past the obvious. Safeguarding is essential to all investigations as safeguarding actions prevent children being exposed to more harm. This builds stronger relationships with children, young people and their families.

Warwickshire Safeguarding is the statutory mechanism for agreeing how the relevant agencies and organisations in Warwickshire cooperate to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in Warwickshire.

This policy should be used in conjunction with locally agreed multi-agency child protection procedures and national guidance.

1.1 DEFINITIONS

1.1.1 Child

A child is defined by section 105 of the Children's Act 1989 as any person under the age of 18 years.

The fact that a child:

- has reached 16 years of age
- is living independently
- is in further education
- is looked after
- is a member of the armed forces
- is in hospital

- is in custody in a secure estate

does not change their status or entitlements to services or protection.

1.1.2 Child Abuse

Child Abuse is the generic term encompassing all situations involving 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 (e.g., 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 (e.g., theft of a mobile phone). However, the police and service providers commissioned by the Police and Crime Commissioner 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 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.

1.1.2 Child Protection

Where there is a risk that a child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm, 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 appropriate. 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 (e.g., 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 (e.g., family, institution or online) and the context or crime type (e.g., peer on peer sexual abuse or trafficking a child).

2. PURPOSE OF POLICY

The police have a duty to safeguard children, so there is a need for Warwickshire police officers and staff to be aware of signs that a child may be subject of abuse or in need of additional support to ensure their protection. Once risk, abuse or neglect is identified this policy places a personal responsibility on those officers and staff to

take the most appropriate and immediate action to safeguard children. Particular care should be taken to identify cumulative risk. It must be recognised that some children are at greater risk of abuse than others and require additional considerations.

The policy is also intended to ensure that Warwickshire Police achieves a consistent and professional approach when responding to or otherwise identifying concerns about the welfare of a child. Key priorities are as follows:

- To protect the lives and wellbeing of children and ensure that, in the policing of child abuse, the welfare of all children is paramount;
- To ensure all incidents are recorded in accordance with the National Crime Recording Standards
- To ensure that the principles of child centred policing, investigating offences against children and safeguarding children is embedded as a mainstream policing activity;
- To ensure the risk to children is appropriately captured in a child risk assessments (CRA) or DARA and these are brought to the attention of the Central Referral and Safeguarding Unit (CRSU) when appropriate so they can be assessed for information sharing with Children's Social Care and appropriate support.
- To take effective action against offenders so that children are protected from harm and where suspects are themselves children provide a 'child first' response which ensures children are supported to change;
- To adopt a proactive multi-agency approach in preventing and reducing all forms of child abuse including adopting a 'Think Family' approach in the context of safeguarding children and adults.
- Ensure all victims and their families are supported and kept fully informed from initial contact and throughout the investigation, adhering to the [Code of Practice for Victims of Crime](#);

3. IMPLICATIONS of the POLICY

Section 10 of the Children's Act 2004 places a statutory responsibility upon the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Chief Constable of Warwickshire Police, to cooperate with relevant partners with a view to improving the well-being of children in the local policing areas so far as relating to:

- a) Physical and mental health and emotional well-being
- b) Protection from harm and neglect
- c) Education, training and recreation
- d) The contribution made by them to society
- e) Social and economic well-being

This also means supporting the Local Authority Child and Young Person Strategy 2021-2030 - 'Child Friendly Warwickshire'

Section 11 of the Children's Act 2004 places a further statutory responsibility upon the Police and Crime Commissioner of Warwickshire Police and the Chief Constable of Warwickshire Police to make arrangements for ensuring that:

- a) Their functions are discharged having regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children; and
- b) Any services provided by another on their behalf are provided having regard to that need.

In addition HM Government have issued statutory guidance on how organisations and individuals should work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people. This is set out in the publication – *'Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018): A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children'*.

All children have a right to protection from all forms of violence and exploitation and to expect that the police will protect and help them. Children are citizens who have the same rights as adults to the protection offered by the criminal law and the expert services of the police. It is acknowledged that this policy has the potential to engage the following Articles:-

- Article 2 Right to Life
- Article 5 Right to Liberty and Security
- Article 6 Right to a Fair Trial
- Article 8 Right to Respect for Private & Family Life

In the event that an Article of the Convention is engaged, then the legitimacy for the engagement is provided within the text of the Articles. Any interference should be in accordance with the law and be necessary and proportionate.

Children are also protected by the United Nations on the Rights of the Child.

The Detective Superintendent for Vulnerability and Safeguarding is the responsible owner for this policy.

4. CONSULTATION

This policy has been circulated to relevant stakeholders including the staff associations and unions.

5. DOCUMENT HISTORY

Date	Author / Reviewer	Amendment(s) & Rationale	Approval / Adoption
January 2016	DCI 23/0200 Richard Long	Harmonised Policy + SOP's to replace procedure published 13/08/2014	JNCC 18/05/2016
April 2017	DS Mark Wilding	Reviewed – No Changes	03/04/2017

March 2022	DI 569 Lisa Sears	Returned to Warwickshire only policy with improved focus on vulnerability related risk, child centred policing and key priorities. New link to Warwickshire Police Procedures	Dec 2023
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6. PROCEDURE

Procedures adopted by Warwickshire in relation to Investigating Child Abuse and Safeguarding Children are set out in a range of national, regional and local documents, and statutory guidance, as follows:

National Police procedures to be followed are set out in the following Approved Professional Practice (APP):

- **College of Policing (2014) : *Police response to investigating child abuse***
<https://www.app.college.police.uk/app-content/major-investigation-and-public-protection/child-abuse/police-response/>

National Multi-Agency procedures to be followed are set out in the following Statutory Guidance:

- **Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018): *A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children***
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2>

Local Multi-Agency procedures to be followed, which are set out to ensure responsibilities under the Children's Act 2004 are undertaken, are as follows:

- <http://westmidlands.procedures.org.uk/>

6.1 Warwickshire Police Child Protection Procedures

When dealing with incidents of child abuse or suspected abuse, officers and staff will:

- Identify and record all concerns about the welfare of a child to trigger the appropriate multi-agency response
- Deal appropriately with any immediate concerns about the welfare of a child
- Record all child abuse incidents, and appropriately investigate all crimes or suspected crimes
- Follow Warwickshire Police 'Standard Operating Procedures' (SOP) developed and published to underpin the above and provide additional clarity. Such procedures are available in the supplementary procedures document: [Child Protection- vulnerability, investigation and safeguarding procedures.\(under construction\)](#)

6.2 Other connected Warwickshire Police procedures and guidance

- [Sudden and Unexpected Deaths in Infants and Children Procedures](#)
- [Procedure for Investigation & Safeguarding of Children & Young Persons through the use of Child Abduction Warning Notices \(CAWN\)](#)
- [PPP Policy PUB 01.02.23 \(warwickshirepolice.uk\)](#)
- [CRSU Procedure Policy PUB 15.02.23 \(warwickshirepolice.uk\)](#)
- [CSODS Procedure PUB 20.01.23 \(warwickshirepolice.uk\)](#)
- [Missing Persons Policy](#)
- [Statutory and Major Crime Review Unit \(SMCRU\) Policy](#)

- [Investigators Guide to Non-Accidental Injury \(NAI\), Head Injury \(NAHI\) and Apparent Life Threatening Event \(ALTE\) in Children](#)
- [Investigator's Guide to dealing with Child Abduction](#)
- [Op Innerste Officer Guidance \(MSHT\)](#)
- [Joint Agency Interviewing of Child Witnesses to Achieve Best Evidence](#)
- [CSE Procedures Warwickshire](#)
- [Op Encompass Procedure](#)
- [Protocol to Reduce the Offending and Criminalisation of Children in Care](#)
- [Joint Decision Making Panel Guidelines](#)
- [Children's Homes Supported Accommodation Engagement Strategy](#)

7. Assessment and Analysis

The Equality Analysis (EA), Health & Safety Assessment (HAS) and Risk Assessment (RA) associated with this document are available on request.