

CHILD MISSION STATEMENT

2026-2028





*“Children must come first – there can be **no compromise** when it comes to child protection. Getting it right most of the time can never be the explanation for failures that have devastating consequences...”*

Drusilla Sharpling CBE

Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary for
National Child Protection Inspections

FOREWORD

Children and young people have the right to be safe, heard and protected from harm. This mission statement sets out how Warwickshire Police will deliver a child-centred service that protects, supports and empowers children.



VISION AND PURPOSE

Warwickshire Police aims to deliver excellent child-centred policing as standard.

Our vision is for every child in Warwickshire to experience policing that is compassionate, fair and responsive. Children deserve to have their voices and best interests considered.

Our purpose is to deliver a service that identifies early opportunities to prevent harm. In cases where children are at risk we must respond quickly and proportionately. We want children to feel that we recognise their rights and wellbeing, balancing the use of Police powers and intervention alongside trauma-informed practice. Policing must seek to protect children, particularly in contexts where they can need it most, such as when they are reported missing or at risk of exploitation. We must relentlessly pursue those who commit offences that harm children, prioritising those adults who seek to exploit, neglect or abuse children.

We adopted the slogan 'No compromise' in our approach to child protection, inspired by former HMI Drusilla Sharpling CBE, who captured the essence of our vision in a previous quote.

Our mission statement will include principles to guide our police service when working with children, families and safeguarding partners. These principles reflect the views and wishes of Warwickshire children, thanks to the good work of our local authority partners who shared their findings from 'Padlet' workshops. A special thanks to representatives on behalf of Warwickshire Safeguarding Children Partnership who gave their time to help us shape this mission statement.

**T/Deputy Chief Constable
Ben Smith**

OUR MISSION:

Serving and protecting our communities



The mission commits Warwickshire Police to providing a child-centred service, with a focus on early help, strong safeguarding, clear referral pathways and effective partnership working so children and families get the right support at the right time.



It promotes high professional standards, public accountability and transparent governance, making it clear that child protection is everyone's responsibility and leaders, supervisors and staff will be held to account for the quality of service provided to children.



It commits our organisation to continuous improvement, using audit, supervision, partner feedback, child voice, lived experience and inspection learning to refine practice, strengthen decision making and improve outcomes for children over time.



It embeds trauma-informed practice, procedural justice and child-friendly communication, ensuring children are listened to, treated with dignity, protected from victim-blaming and adultification, supported in ways that reflect their lived experience and individual needs.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Underpinned by the National Vulnerability and Public Protection Strategy 4P framework (Prepare, Prevent, Protect, Pursue)



Prepare

Build and sustain a police culture that puts children first, understands children's lived experience and develops the knowledge, confidence and supervision needed to protect them effectively.

- Develop a child-centred culture where officers and staff understand the effects of trauma, exploitation, neglect, domestic abuse exposure, victim-blaming language and adultification.
- Provide role-specific training and continuing professional development for frontline officers, staff, supervisors and specialists, including child communication, online exploitation, missing investigations, contextual safeguarding, investigative mindset and use of protective powers.
- Strengthen digital investigative skills, ensuring our service to the public effectively recognises digital risk and provides a response that considers relevant opportunities, including; safeguarding, evidence recovery, proportionate lines of enquiry, and use of National/specialist systems and/or support.
- Give supervisors the authority, time, capability and training to lead child-centred safeguarding and investigations, set plans, review risk and support less experienced staff.
- Maintain robust assurance of child protection capability, training completion, supervision quality, wellbeing awareness and work resilience in high-risk roles.



Prevent

Amplify children's voices and deliver early, accessible support through contextual safeguarding, inclusive diversion, high-quality information sharing and trusted multi-agency partnerships that reduce harm and disproportionality.

- Use early help, prevention, contextual safeguarding and problem solving to reduce the risk of children coming to harm, going missing or being exploited.
- Work with children's homes, schools, transport providers, community organisations and safeguarding partners to address repeat missing episodes, place-based risk and extra-familial harm.
- Make referral pathways accessible and timely, ensuring children and families are directed to the right help at the right time.
- Use data, problem profiles and partner information to identify patterns of neglect, exploitation, missing and disproportionality and then target activity accordingly.
- Apply proportionate diversionary and restorative approaches where appropriate, especially when children are suspects, ensuring safeguarding and child welfare remain central.

Protect

Provide timely, risk-led safeguarding that prioritises children who are missing, exploited, abused or neglected, and ensures high-quality multi-agency referral, decision making and support.

- Respond promptly to all safeguarding concerns involving children and avoid delays that leave children exposed to risk, particularly in missing investigations, domestic abuse, exploitation and online harm cases.
- Capture the voice of the child, complete high-quality safeguarding records and make effective referrals that focus on the child, not just the presenting adult or incident.
- Use Operation Encompass, strategy meetings, Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) arrangements and other multi-agency processes effectively so children receive support quickly and decisions are made in their best interests.
- Make careful, child-centred use of police protection and other protective powers, with proper oversight, recording and review by designated officers.
- Ensure Victim Code of Practice is embedded in investigations and safeguarding plans, such as victim needs assessments, tailored communication, special measures consideration and child-friendly support.



A young person's view on why the police should prioritise children and young people's voices:

“It makes children and young people feel like they are being believed when they bring something up and makes them understand that it's okay to go to the police and not be scared.”

VKPP research and consultation with young people

Pursue

- Relentlessly identify, investigate and disrupt offenders (both online and offline), applying an evidence-led approach, child-centred practice, and strong supervision.
- Apply an investigative mindset from first contact, recognising golden-hour opportunities and the need to identify offenders, protect other children and secure digital, forensic, scene and witness evidence early.
- Investigate upwards to exploiters, organisers and repeat perpetrators, being curious beyond the immediate behaviour of children. Use the understanding created by problem profiles, intelligence and contextual information to enable effective problem solving approaches to any issues that pose threat and risk to children in Warwickshire
- Improve the quality of investigations into online exploitation by making sure frontline staff and supervisors know how to preserve evidence, seize devices, trace offenders, recover images, use Child Abuse Image Database (CAID) and consider risk to other children.
- Use specialist resources effectively, including child abuse investigators, exploitation specialists, online investigation teams, missing teams and serious organised crime capabilities where the threat requires it.
- Use protective and disruption powers proactively including child abduction warning notices, sexual risk and sexual harm orders, and other civil or criminal tools that reduce offender access to children.



“Policing identifies that all children up to the age of 18 are vulnerable and therefore particularly at risk, with a child-centred approach required in interactions with them.”



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“We need to feel that you care.”

“Small things make a big difference. Every interaction has an impact, whether that’s positive or negative.”



“Listen, understand and take us seriously (without judgement).”

“If we don’t feel safe, we can’t be expected to learn.”

Feedback from children in Warwickshire collected by the Voice, Influence and Change Team at Warwickshire County Council

CHILD PRINCIPLES



- Prioritise child safeguarding and wellbeing from first contact, always acting in their best interests.
- Treat every child as a child, challenging adultification, victim-blaming and language or assumptions that minimise harm.
- Recognise behaviour as a potential sign of harm, coercion, exploitation, neglect, fear, unmet need or trauma, and look beyond the presenting incident to the child's wider circumstances.
- Use police powers only where necessary, ensuring they are lawful, proportionate, clearly explained and carefully supervised.



- Listen to children and meaningfully capture their voice, including their words, demeanour, behaviour, environment and lived experience.
- Use age-appropriate, child-friendly communication. Adapt a trauma-informed approach considering the child's needs, experiences, age, development, language, disability, neurodiversity, and culture.
- Check understanding throughout.



- Provide clear explanations, updates and information about safeguarding actions, support options and anticipated next steps.
- Build trust by acting early and involving partners, so children and families can access help before harm escalates.
- Recognise and seek to reduce any perceived barriers to support, whether they are linked to ethnicity, disability, special educational needs, poverty, care status, culture, language, gender or previous contact with services.
- Apply contextual safeguarding by considering risks in places, peer groups, homes, transport networks and online spaces, working with partners to make environments safer.



- Develop and maintain trauma-informed practice, taking personal responsibility to understand why and how we should deliver child-centred service.
- Learn from children, families and partners you work with.
- Reflect on feedback, outcomes and professional reviews.
- Remain open to improvement through supervision, audit and learning.
- Use qualitative and quantitative data to understand harm, improve outcomes and address disproportionality.



- Make evidence-led decisions considering children's rights, needs, voice, context and risks posed by harmful adults or peers.
- Maintain accurate records, flags, qualifiers and linked intelligence so risk is visible and safeguarding decisions are well-informed.
- Share relevant information promptly with partners to support effective, joined-up safeguarding and accountability.
- Promote positive pathways through prevention, early intervention, restorative approaches and proportionate diversion, avoiding unnecessary criminalisation.

GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Effective governance provides the strategic direction, clear accountability and quality assurance required to keep children safe and continuously improve the police service.

Executive ownership

An Assistant Chief Constable will hold executive ownership for this strategy and chair the relevant Gold governance arrangements for child protection, vulnerability and safeguarding. Strategic leads will be accountable for delivery against agreed priorities, performance standards and improvement plans.

Operational and thematic oversight

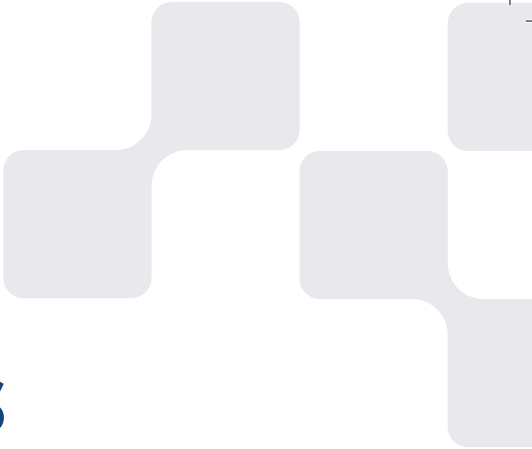
- Child-centred performance and practice will be reviewed through governance structures, including vulnerability and safeguarding boards, child protection performance meetings and operational boards.
- Leaders will use daily and monthly management meetings to maintain visibility of high-risk children, missing episodes, exploitation concerns, serious child abuse cases, resource pressures and safeguarding backlogs.
- Senior thematic leads will oversee specific child protection priorities such as missing, exploitation, risk assessment quality, victim-centred practice and standards of investigation.

Partnership governance

Warwickshire Police will play a visible and accountable role within local safeguarding arrangements. Senior leaders will contribute actively to statutory safeguarding structures and challenge constructively where partnership performance, thresholds or system issues place children at risk. Multi-agency working will be treated as core business.

Learning and improvement

We will use audits, thematic testing, dip sampling, peer reviews, safeguarding review learning, partner feedback, child and family feedback and inspection findings to identify strengths, risks and opportunities for improvement. Learning will be translated into action plans with owners, timescales and measurable practice change.



STRATEGIC ENABLERS

People, skills and supervision

Warwickshire Police will maintain sufficient skilled and knowledgeable officers and staff to safeguard children and investigate child abuse, neglect and exploitation effectively. We will know where capability sits, what training has been completed, where gaps remain and how supervision is supporting less experienced staff.

Digital intelligence and evidence capability

We will strengthen our ability to identify, preserve, analyse and use digital evidence in child protection and child exploitation investigations. Digital capability will be treated as an essential safeguarding requirement, especially in cases involving grooming, image-based abuse, extortion and online exploitation.

Data quality and insight

We will treat data quality as a safeguarding issue. Recording of ethnicity, disability, special educational needs, linked persons, risk markers and child exploitation indicators will be improved so leaders and practitioners can assess risk more accurately, identify disproportionality and understand the nature and scale of harm affecting children.

Wellbeing and employee support

We will support the wellbeing of officers and staff working in high-risk or trauma-exposed roles. High-risk roles will be clearly identified; annual psychological screening and trauma support will be proactively offered; and we will test not only whether support exists, but whether staff know about it, trust it and use it.

Partnership and community voice

We will work with statutory and non-statutory partners, local communities, children's advocates and those with lived experience to shape service design, improve accessibility, support prevention and strengthen legitimacy.

NATIONAL CONTEXT

Policing in England and Wales is progressing from primarily a reactive, enforcement-led position to a prevention-first, child-centred Public Protection model. This national direction is set by the National Vulnerability & Public Protection Strategy (NCVPP), which gives forces a single whole-system framework - the 4Ps (Prevent, Prepare, Pursue, Protect) - and clear governance, data and partnership expectations so that responses to children are consistent, auditable and outcomes-focused across the country.

To turn strategy into practice, the Vulnerability Knowledge & Practice Programme (VKPP) builds and shares the evidence on the scale and complexity of harm to children (including online and group-based exploitation). VKPP has published practice on capturing the voice of the child and principles of trauma-informed and age-appropriate communication.

The College of Policing's Authorised Professional Practice (APP) informs operational guidance such as the police's statutory duty to safeguard under section 11 of the Children Act 2004, how to complete thorough child-abuse investigations, considering golden-hour actions for missing children, robust digital-evidence handling (e.g., device seizure/CAID).

Inspection-led improvement is a core driver. HMICFRS now assesses every force through the National Child Protection Inspection programme, placing the child's lived experience at the centre of judgments and repeatedly highlighting that purely reactive practice - particularly around missing children and online exploitation - does not deliver the safety, trust or performance the public expects. This demands a strategic, child-centred approach with clear measures and assurance.

A strong evidence base also confirms that early, pre-charge diversion reduces reoffending and violence and is often more cost-effective than formal processing - especially for younger children emphasising the importance on embedding proportionate appropriate outcomes in investigations involving children as suspects.

Trauma-informed practice (including learning from Violence Reduction Units) will strengthen legitimacy, improve engagement and reduce harm; and adopting contextual safeguarding practice to identify and address extra-familial harm that might be present in peer groups, public spaces and online - changing unsafe environments proactively, rather than reacting to incidents in isolation.

Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023) requires statutory safeguarding partners - including the Chief Constable - to publish local multi-agency arrangements.

Warwickshire Safeguarding Children Partnership has introduced a model for safeguarding that aims to develop a family-focused approach through increased multi-agency collaboration. Warwickshire Police are a key member of this partnership, with representatives at Lead Safeguarding Partner and Delegated Safeguarding Partner levels.

The shared partner vision is to work together to support, safeguard and listen to the voices of children, young people and families and to learn from each other to improve outcomes for families across Warwickshire.

This Warwickshire strategy adopts these national expectations through its 4Ps delivery framework, with underpinning principles and transparent measures, translating them into local action so that children in Warwickshire are safe, heard and respected, and inspection-ready.

Importantly, the core focus of our strategy is taken from the pillars of the NPCC strategy, aiming to support a culture of Children Centred Policing: 'Your Trust', 'Your Voice', and 'Your Future'.



REFERENCES:

NCVPP National Vulnerability & Public Protection Strategy (July 2025).

NCVPP Governance Toolkit (Oct 2025).

NCVPP Data & Performance Toolkit (Oct 2025).

NCVPP 4P specific toolkits (Oct 2025).

College of Policing APP.

HMICFRS – National Child Protection Inspections (2024 Framework) and recent NCPI findings.

Special thanks to WSCP contributors and Voice, Influence and change Team (WCC).



**WARWICKSHIRE
POLICE**

