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Appendices

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1. Introduction

This Service Instruction provides the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) with clear information on how to safeguard and protect those children and young people that they come into contact with during the course of their duty.


2. Objective

It is important that child protection is not seen solely as the role of the Public Protection Branch and its respective specialist units, but that it is a fundamental part of the duties of all Police Officers and Police Staff.

Protecting life and preventing crime are primary tasks of Police. Children are citizens who have the right to the protection of both criminal and civil law. Police have a duty and responsibility to investigate criminal offences committed against children. The child’s welfare is the overriding consideration and investigations should be carried out sensitively, thoroughly and professionally.

Part of the duty of every member of the PSNI to safeguard and protect children is to assist staff within Health and Social Care (HSC) Trusts - (Social Services) in the exercise of their duty to investigate whether a child is suffering or likely to suffer Significant Harm.

Definitions

A child is defined by Article 1 of the Children (NI) Order 1995 as any person under 18 years of age.

‘Child Abuse’ is a generic term encompassing all situations involving the ill-treatment of children including the sexual and physical assaults of children, cruelty, as well as cases where the standard of care indicate or pose a risk of Significant Harm.

The PSNI has adopted the definition of child abuse set out in ‘Co-operating to Safeguard Children in Northern Ireland’ (Department of Health) guidance for interagency working. It defines child abuse into five broad categories – sexual abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse, neglect and exploitation.
Significant Harm - There is no absolute legal or medically defined criteria to constitute Significant Harm. This is a threshold decision of harm (ill-treatment or the impairment of health and development) and whether the harm is significant based on the specific case, its context and any aggravating factors.

HSC Trusts are duty bound to make enquiries or cause enquiries to be made in circumstances where they have a reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering or likely to suffer Significant Harm. Article 66 of The Children (NI) Order 1995 provides for compulsory intervention in family life in the best interests of children.

3. Missing Children
The PSNI and HSC Trusts will share information in order to work co-operatively to affect the safe recovery of children who are missing – Details of roles, responsibilities and investigative actions are contained within the Regional Guidance – Missing Children Protocol (Runaway and Missing from Home and Care) and PSNI Service Procedure 08/15 Police Action in Respect of Missing Persons (available on the PSNI website under Corporate Policy).

4. Children as Witnesses to Crime
Where children are witness to or are victims of ANY crime, the courts make special provision for children giving their evidence to the court. This includes the use of specially trained interviewers.

Investigators must complete a needs assessment of the witness and provide the necessary advice and support for the interview process, the investigation and any subsequent court hearing.

The investigator must make a written record of the assessment, including the relevant rationale for how the interview should be conducted and any applicable ‘Special Measures’.

Initial Contact with Child Victims and Witnesses
It is important, that where child victims and witnesses to a crime are spoken to by police, that a proper assessment is conducted to establish the most appropriate method of conducting an interview and recording their account. While the safety and welfare of the child must be paramount, initial considerations must include the need to take immediate action in terms of securing medical attention and making initial decisions about the criminal investigation plan, this may
mean that some initial questioning is necessary.

Any initial questioning should be intended to elicit 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. In depth questioning should not be conducted nor should a 'statement' be recorded at this stage. If the witness response to the open question "Tell me what happened to you" does not include what when who and where, the following questions should be asked:

- What happened? (enough detail to establish what offence has taken place)
- When did it happen? (in order to prioritise actions)
- Who is involved? (enough information to trace suspects)
- Where did it happen? (Enough information to identify all relevant scenes)

This is because this information is likely to influence decisions made in respect of the following aspects of the criminal investigation plan:

- Forensic and medical examination of the victim;
- Scene of crime examination;
- Interviewing of other witnesses;
- Arrest of alleged offender(s);
- Witness support;
- Need to safeguard the victim/witness.

Further information can be found within the, Witness Charter, Service Instruction 1317 Supporting Victims and Witnesses, (available on the PSNI website under Corporate Policy) and within the College of Policing Authorised Professional Practice – Investigative Interviewing.

Some initial questioning may also be needed in order to obtain enough information to formulate a risk assessment for the witness and to take whatever action is necessary to remove or reduce any risks that are identified.

5. Investigation of Child Abuse

The PSNI recognises the difference between children as victims of crime and child abuse in that not all criminal offences against children will meet the definition of child abuse.
Child abuse is defined as the physical, sexual or emotional abuse of a child or neglect (cruelty) towards a child.

**If the child is a victim of alleged or suspected child abuse then the matter will be investigated by the Child Abuse Investigation Unit (CAIU).** All such cases should be referred to the Child Abuse Investigation Unit through the PSNI Central Referral Unit (CRU) in accordance with the CRU Standard Operating Protocol and the Protocol for the Joint Investigation of Alleged and Suspected cases of Child Abuse – Northern Ireland.

The PSNI are the lead agency for all criminal investigation elements within a child abuse enquiry. In dealing with offences involving Child Abuse police will work in partnership with Social Services.

Police investigation considerations, actions and processes are detailed within the [College of Policing Authorised Professional Practice – Major Investigations, Public Protection](#), Child Abuse and Safeguarding Children. Responsibility for managing child abuse investigations rests with C7 Public Protection Branch – namely the Public Protection Unit ((PPU) including the Child Abuse Investigation Unit (CAIU), Child Internet Protection Team (CIPT)), Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and Rape Crime Unit (RCU).

**Where a child is the victim of a crime that is NOT alleged or suspected Child Abuse** such reports will not be investigated by C7 Public Protection Branch, but will be allocated to other departments/units within the PSNI for investigation.

In these cases consideration should be given to liaison with partner agencies including Social Services who may have information pertinent to the investigation.

**6. Children as Victims of Sexual Crime**

All victims of sexual offences should be taken to The Rowan (Sexual Assault Referral Centre) for forensic examination and secondary sexual health care. The detail of any circumstances where the victim is not taken to the Rowan must be recorded along with the relevant rationale.

Where the victim is already in hospital for medical treatment or requires immediate medical attention, then they should be taken immediately to a medical facility to receive the appropriate treatment. In such cases, The Rowan staff can where appropriate, attend that location to conduct the forensic medical examination.
In cases where there are reports of non-recent sexual abuse of children, investigators should also consider The Rowan for the same reasons.

Further information and guidance can be found at; Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health and the Faculty of Forensic and Legal Medicine – guidelines on Paediatric Forensic Examination.

And within the College of Policing Authorised Professional Practice- Major Investigation and Public Protection.

7. Child Sexual Exploitation

Exploitation is the intentional ill-treatment, manipulation or abuse of power and control over a child or young person; to take selfish or unfair advantage of a child or young person or situation, for personal gain. It may manifest itself in many forms such as child labour, slavery, servitude, engagement in criminal activity, begging, benefit or other financial fraud or child trafficking. It extends to the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of children for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation can be sexual in nature.

**Child Sexual Exploitation** (CSE) is not a specific criminal offence in itself but rather encompasses a range of offences and other forms of serious criminal offences. Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) is a form of sexual abuse where children are sexually exploited for sexual gratification, money, power or status. It can involve violent, humiliating and degrading sexual assaults. In some cases, young people are persuaded or forced into exchanging sexual activity for money, drugs, gifts, affection or status. Consent (from a child in these circumstances) cannot be given, even where a child may believe they are voluntarily engaging in sexual activity with the person who is exploiting them. CSE doesn’t always involve physical contact and can happen online or by any other electronic medium. A significant number of children or young people who are victims of sexual exploitation go missing from home, care and education at some point. CSE specific procedural and investigative guidance can be found within the College of Policing Authorised Professional Practice Guidance on Child Sexual Exploitation.
8. Child Deaths

The investigation of the death of a child is an extremely complex area of police work; and is also very demanding for investigators in terms of emotional pressure. Children are not meant to die, and the police investigation into the sudden death of a child must be influenced by this basic fact. This means that even when there are no apparent suspicious factors, the police contribution to the investigation must be detailed and thorough.

Full detail for the investigation of all child deaths can be found in the Service Instruction 0216: Death Investigation (available on the PSNI website under Corporate Policy) and within the College of Policing Authorised Professional Practice - A Guide to Investigating Child Deaths.

9. Sharing Information for Child Protection

Effective child protection stands or falls on the quality of assessment and analysis of the risks to an individual child. Effective analysis and assessment of risk in turn relies on the availability of, and access to, relevant, accurate and up to date information. Access to relevant and up to date information for child protection purposes often means that personal or sensitive information has to be shared with and by the PSNI.

Relevant information should only be shared if the purpose is to protect a child or is for the prevention/detection of crime. Disclosure of this nature should not be made on an ad hoc basis. Records of the rationale to share and what was shared must be recorded.

Further guidance is available on Sharing to Safeguard – Information Sharing About Individuals Who May Pose A Risk To Children.

10. Statutory powers for Protecting Children

Article 65 of the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 provides authority for a Police Officer of any rank who encounters a child in a set of circumstances where they have reasonable cause to believe that that child is likely then and there or in the immediate future to suffer Significant Harm then that officer can remove that child to suitable accommodation or prevent that child’s removal from the place where he/she is being accommodated.
It is the responsibility for the officer who is at the relevant location and who formulated that belief who must make the decision whether to remove a child or prevent the child’s removal.

It is not for that officer’s supervisor (Duty Inspector) or another third party to ‘authorise’ that decision.

11. Police Attendance at Child Protection Case Conferences

Police have a responsibility to assist Social Services with their enquiries into concerns that a child is suffering or likely to suffer Significant Harm and the Police Service of Northern Ireland will aim to have attendance at 100% of all initial case conferences where any case of ‘child abuse’ is being investigated.

In all other cases the PSNI will where possible attend where Police have a significant contribution to make to the decision making process.

12. Children as Perpetrators of Crime

A primary aim of the PSNI is to identify and respond to those children/young persons who are involved in offending /antisocial behaviour or are at risk of becoming involved in such behaviours. In addition to standard investigative considerations for investigations there are particular considerations for children and young persons which can be found in Service Instruction 0817 Youth Justice, (available on the PSNI website under Corporate Policy).

This Service Instruction will provide guidance for officers when dealing with young people suspected of committing offences.

13. The Child Protection Register

Health and Social Care Trusts are required to maintain a register of every child in its area who is considered to be suffering from or likely to suffer Significant Harm, for whom there is an unresolved child protection issue and who are currently subject to an interagency child protection
plan. It is not a list of children who have been abused.

Access to the Child Protection Register (CPR) is restricted to professionals (including the PSNI) concerned with welfare of a child, where it is necessary to protect that child or other children. Routine liaison and access to the ‘Register’ will normally be completed by staff within the Public Protection Unit. Where the Child Protection Register (CPR) needs to be accessed as a matter of urgency this will be undertaken by a Police Officer of Inspector rank or above who will liaise with the Register Custodian within the respective HSC Trust or outside working hours the Regional Emergency Social Work Service (contact details held by call management).

14. Children in Domestic Circumstances

Domestic Abuse is an important indicator of the risk of Significant Harm to children and the adverse effects of living with Domestic Abuse for children must be recognised as a child protection issue. Further guidance on relevant considerations can be found in the ‘Children in Domestic Incidents’ guidance and also the Safeguarding Board Northern Ireland ‘Regional Policy and Procedures’ for child protection.

15. Allegations made against PSNI Officers and Staff

Allegations of Child Abuse made against PSNI officers/staff will be taken seriously and immediate steps will be taken to ensure an appropriate investigation is conducted.

16. Child Abduction

Article 4 of the Child Abduction (NI) Order 1985 states that it is an offence if without lawful authority or reasonable excuse a person takes or detains a child under the age of 16 years.

Article 68 of the Children (NI) Order 1995 states it is an offence if a person knowingly and without lawful authority or reasonable excuse, takes a child to whom this Article applies away from the responsible person; keeps such a child away from the responsible person; or induces, assists or incites such a child to run away or stay away from the responsible person. A child
referred to in this Article is any child under 18 years old.

Please note that Article 68 of the Children (NI) Order 1995 applies only to children who are in care or who are the subject of an emergency protection order or who are in police protection. Under the legislation the, “Responsible person,” is a person who has care of a child by virtue of the care order, the emergency protection order or has care of the child under Article 65 of the Children (NI) Order.

Article 69 of the Children (NI) Order 1995 provides that a court can make an order for the recovery of a child to whom Article 68 applies.

**Child Abduction Warning Notice (CAWN)**

There may be occasions where a child/young person frequents or socialises in adult company, or with an adult (a ‘person of concern’) without the consent of the parent/carer. Whilst the intention of either party may be entirely innocent, an investigation, as is reasonable in the circumstances, should be considered and where appropriate undertaken to establish the nature of the contact and appropriate action taken according to the risks as presented. Initially, police must ascertain what the most appropriate course of action is, whether to proceed with a CAWN or use powers of arrest. Public Protection Units do not routinely investigate such cases.

17. **Dealing with Bullying**

All reports of bullying must in the first instance be considered as a potential criminal offence. As such they must be recorded and investigated.
Appendix B Children in Domestic Incidents

Children in Domestic Incidents

(a) Officers attending Domestic Incidents will take note of children who are resident of, or present in the home or if the alleged victim is pregnant. The information will be passed to the relevant Social Services Trust in written form as soon as possible.

(b) The wide adverse effects of living with domestic abuse for children must be recognised as a child protection issue. They link to poor educational achievement, social exclusion and to juvenile crime, substance abuse, mental health problems and homelessness from running away.

(c) Domestic abuse is an important indicator of risk of significant harm to children. Children can be at risk of harm from:

(i) Assault by the perpetrator of the abuse;

(ii) Witnessing violence towards one parent; and

(iii) Being aware of the abuse whether physical or emotional. They do not have to be present to be aware of domestic abuse.

(d) Research has shown that children who are either present at or hear incidents of domestic abuse can be deeply affected (this could include behavioural, physical and psychological effects). In 90% of incidents occurring within families, children are in the same or next room, which can cause distress and confusion. Some children may not display any visible reaction but one should not assume they are unaffected. Where there is evidence of domestic abuse in a family, the likelihood of child abuse is greatly increased.

(e) There is also a correlation between pregnancy and domestic abuse, though this may be because young women are a group at higher than average risk of domestic abuse, and pregnant women fall disproportionately into this group.

(f) Domestic abuse may also incorporate honour based violence, forced marriage and female genital mutilation, where the alleged perpetrator is a family member or partner/ex-partner within the context of these crimes. When responding to such reports, the victim’s immediate safety must be the overriding concern. At the earliest opportunity a supervisor must be informed.
A victim will have overcome immense cultural and probably personal beliefs, to make contact with the police. It is vital therefore that police respond immediately in a caring, empathetic manner and effectively to keep the victim safe. Please see ‘Internal Policy Links’ for details of specific service procedures in responding to such reports.

Response

Prior to police arrival, checks should be made by call takers on Niche, ViSOR as well as any local databases and information passed to the police officers attending the incident of the existence of firearms, bail conditions, civil injunctions, as well as any relevant history or factors that may effect the police response. Upon police arrival at the incident, the call taker should contact the victim so that officers can be safely admitted to the premises.

On arrival at the scene, on no account be satisfied that all is well solely on the word of the alleged perpetrator. Police should speak to all parties involved in the domestic incident and where children are present in the premises, officers should physically check on their welfare. They should also carry out relevant checks re sex and violent offenders via NICHE and ViSOR. When officers do not see children, they should ask if children are resident at the address and look for signs such as clothing and toys, as well as checking bedrooms. NB Where a child reports a domestic abuse/incident between parents/partners officers should ensure that they speak directly to the child reporting this, with the consent of their parent or guardian and not just accept the responses of the parents/partners. The facts and issues surrounding a child reporting such an incident must be reported to the PPU and the subsequent referral to the Social Services as soon as possible after the incident. A record of all information should be retained. Officers will then ensure that all reasonable steps are taken to safeguard the safety of the victim and child/children. Removing the perpetrator from the home should be considered unless the safest option is to remove the victim and child/children.

If a child is a member of the household or the victim is pregnant the Duty Social Worker should be informed if there are immediate concerns in respect of the welfare, protection or control of a child.

In the absence of any immediate risk details should be passed to the relevant local HSC Trust Gateway Team as soon as possible.

Police officers should advise victims that it is police policy to share information with the local Family and Child Care Manager where children are resident or present at the home at the time of the incident or where the victim is pregnant.
(vi) If it is known that the alleged perpetrator has children elsewhere HSS Trust Gateway Team should also be advised.

(vii) All threats to the life of a child becoming known to the Police Service or other agencies, particularly those made in the context of a domestic violence incident and/or where there is a history of mental health issues should be reported to the Health and Social Care Trust’s Gateway Service for investigation and assessment. Furthermore, this referral should be treated as urgent and made as soon as possible after receipt of this information.

(viii) Where a child reports a domestic abuse incident/crime between partners/parents, officers should ensure that they speak directly to the child reporting this, with the consent of their parent or guardian, and not just accepted the responses of the parents/partners. The facts and issues surrounding a child reporting such an incident must be reported to the PPU and the subsequent referral to the Social Services as soon as possible after the incident.

(ix) Where a child or young person is to be served a Non Molestation or Occupation Order, Social Services should be notified prior to the service. It is recognised that these young people may have particular needs or concerns and who require support - therefore, the liaison between PSNI and Social Services is to ensure that the situation is assessed as appropriate and relevant services are arranged to support the individual. If PSNI records indicate that the Respondent is ‘Looked After’ whether on a voluntary basis or under an Interim or Full Care Order, the Director of Social Services for the relevant HSCT or the named Key Worker should be notified prior to service, to allow for a suitable time/place for service by the police and social services to be in attendance to support the individual.

(i) Principles

(i) The needs of the child are paramount.

(ii) Protection - when intervention is required, attention should be given to reducing risks to the adult victim and children. The potential risk from the perpetrator if they are aware of a referral to Social Services should be taken into consideration.

(iii) Confidentiality - no personal information about an individual should be given to any agency/professional without the individual’s consent. However, where there is a risk of significant harm to a child (or unborn child) this consent is not necessary.
(iv) Support - victims and children should feel supported by professionals and agencies including the Police Service, not judged by them.

(v) Partnership - professionals/agencies should work in partnership with victims to prevent further harm to them and their children.

(vi) Prevention - raising community awareness about domestic violence is a first step to its prevention.

(j) Recording - Police should record the following information:

(i) Who were involved;

(ii) What happened;

(iii) Any injuries and to whom;

(iv) Were there children present and if so where in the home;

(v) Were the children seen by police;

(vi) Name, including other family names and any previously used names;

(vii) Date of birth;

(viii) Sex;

(ix) Normal address;

(x) General Practitioner;

(xi) Primary carer or care arrangements for looking after children;

(xii) School;

(xiii) Full details of the child’s circumstances as witnessed by the officer, to include personal welfare, cleanliness, communication ability, injuries and demeanour;

(xiv) Details of anything said by the child;

(xv) What action has been taken;

(xvi) Knowledge of previous incidents.
Appendix C Contact Us

Service Instruction Author

Detective Constable (Crime Training)

Branch Email

zPublicProtectionSecretariat