



MERSEYSIDE  
**POLICE**

# Child Abuse Policy

**OFFICIAL**

<b>Publication Scheme Y/N</b>	Policy section can be published on Force Website Procedure should be withheld
<b>Department of Origin</b>	Investigation and Intelligence
<b>Policy Holder</b>	Detective Chief Superintendent
<b>Author</b>	Detective Constable Public Protection Unit
<b>Related information</b>	<a href="#">Authorised Professional Practice: Investigating Child Abuse and Safeguarding Children (and all associated reference material)</a> <a href="#">Authorised Professional Practice: Child Sexual Exploitation</a> <a href="#">Authorised Professional Practice: Sudden Unexpected Death in Childhood</a> <a href="#">Child Abduction Warnings</a> <a href="#">Child Sexual Exploitation Policy</a> <a href="#">Home Office (2008) Safeguarding children in whom illness is fabricated or induced</a> <a href="#">Domestic Abuse Policy</a> <a href="#">FGM Protocol (2013) Merseyside Police and CPS</a> <a href="#">HM Government (2015) What to do if you're worried a child is being abused</a> <a href="#">HM Government (2018) Working Together to Safeguard Children</a> <a href="#">Honour Based Abuse and Forced Marriage Policy</a> <a href="#">Intermediaries - Guidance</a> <a href="#">Investigating Indecent Images of Children Policy</a> <a href="#">Missing Person Policy</a> <a href="#">PAN Merseyside Multi-Agency Child Exploitation Protocol 2018</a> <a href="#">Rape and Serious Sexual Assault Policy</a> <a href="#">Sexual Offenders, Violent Offenders and other Potentially Dangerous Persons Policy</a> <a href="#">SUDiC Joint Agency Protocol</a> <a href="#">Officer Guidance</a> <a href="#">Police and Social Care Joint Working Protocol</a>
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# Policy

## Statement

Merseyside Police is committed to the protection and wider safeguarding issues of children. In doing so we view the abuse of any child as unacceptable and will work with partner agencies to investigate and, where possible, prevent such abuse. Concerns for the safety of officers attending an incident should not prevent officers from being deployed to protect a child. (Child Abuse is fully defined within the [College of Policing APP - Investigating child abuse and safeguarding children](#)).

## Aims

The policy's primary aim is to protect the lives of children and ensure their welfare. Associated aims are to thoroughly investigate all reports of child abuse and to take effective action against offenders so that they can be held accountable through the criminal justice system.

The policy is underpinned by procedures designed to provide clear, definitive and unambiguous direction for all those involved in its deployment.

## Objectives

Specific objectives relating to distinct activity are to:

- a) Ensure all reports of child abuse are dealt with in a prompt and timely manner;
- b) Ensure all incidents are recorded in accordance with the National Crime Recording Standards;
- c) Set a consistent standard for reporting, investigation and preparation of court files;
- d) Ensure all incidents of child abuse, whether actual or suspected, are brought to the attention of the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and the Vulnerable Person Referral Unit (VPRU)
- e) Ensure all victims and their families are treated courteously and according to need;
- f) 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](#);
- g) Improve accuracy of statistical data;
- h) Adopt a proactive multi-agency approach to prevent and reduce child abuse.
- i) Ensure Voice of the child (VOC) is considered at all incidents involving children or where children are present for more information use [Voice Of The Child](#) link.

## Application and Scope

All police officers and police staff, including the extended police family and those working voluntarily or under contract to Merseyside Police must be aware of, and are required to comply with, all relevant policy and associated procedures.

This policy document sets out principles to help guide decision making and is in some parts quite prescriptive. However, it is vital that officers and staff have the freedom to innovate, exercise discretion and take risk based decisions centred on the needs of the victim and the merits of each case. Non-statutory policies, including College of Policing APP, provide guidance only. They are 'living documents' and it is recognised that there may be a better way of doing this. Accordingly, if staff depart from a policy but are able to give a good rationale for their actions, and have acted with honesty, integrity and professionalism, to make the best decision for the community we serve, they will be trusted and supported. <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This paragraph inserted April 2019 to emphasise appropriate use of discretion.

The Chief Officer lead for Child Abuse is the Assistant Chief Constable responsible for Investigation and Intelligence.

### **Outcome Evaluation**

Progress against specific objectives should be measured on a routine basis. The Head of Crime/Chair of PVP Performance will determine responsibilities and activities involved in measurement.

In general terms, success will mean that appropriate risk assessments are completed, quality investigations are conducted, preventative engagement has increased and partner agencies have been consulted in all relevant cases within timescales.