

Investigation of Indecent Images of Children POLICY (only)

OFFICIAL

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Policy

Supporting Documents:

This guidance should be read in conjunction with the following documents:

[Family-Pack-2023.pdf \(college.police.uk\)](#)

[Practical Advice for Investigators re: CSAE](#)

APP Guidance:

[Indecent Images of Children | College of Policing](#)

[Managing sexual offenders and violent offenders | College of Policing](#)

[Police response to concern for a child | College of Policing](#)

National Context

When developing this policy in Merseyside Police, while adopting and remaining consistent with the overall [College of Policing APP – Indecent Images of Children](#) framework, we sought to identify a localised policy that reflects force needs.

Statement

Investigations into online Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation (CSAE) should be conducted with regard to the guidance contained within the [Practical Advice for Investigators re: CSAE](#). This guidance document, published in November 2023, was commissioned by the National Police Chief's Council and produced by the Hydrant Programme to support investigators.

The protection of children is a priority for Merseyside Police. We are committed to thoroughly and effectively investigating all allegations involving indecent images of children and similarly committed to successfully prosecuting offenders. We will develop pro-active partnership working with other agencies to enable more effective data sharing. This should help ensure that our risk assessment process is properly informed so we can prioritise and effectively conclude investigations.

We will strive to provide a professional service ensuring that any investigation provides the best possible evidence to enable the prosecution and conviction of offenders.

Aims

This policy has two main aims. One is to set guidance for investigating offences of making, possession and distribution, of indecent images of children, in which Police will work in

partnership to ensure protection of children. Another is to ensure that all risks posed are appropriately assessed and management strategies prepared for alleged offenders.

All investigations, whether non-recent, contemporary or online should be victim focused. This requires investigators to engage with victims according to their individual needs and in accordance with their opinions and wishes. The voice of the victim is central to such matters and investigators should acknowledge that criminal justice outcomes are not the only positive outcome for victims, and on occasions, it is not what they seek. Above all, and throughout all that we do, safeguarding and victim welfare is paramount, and should run as a golden thread throughout all policy decisions and strategies, even where this may risk damaging or frustrating a criminal investigation.

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 activities are to:

- a) Minimise risk of further harm to children.
- b) Give due regard to the welfare and safety of suspects.
- c) Provide officers dealing with indecent images professional welfare support.
- d) Share concerns with partner agencies and employers promptly and responsibly.
- e) Ensure that all reports are appropriately risk assessed and prioritised.
- f) Ensure information is ethically shared with relevant areas of policing where appropriate.
- g) Ensure Force intelligence systems accurately reflect risks and concerns.
- h) Increase multi-agency responsibility for risk management.
- i) Reduce delays in prosecution.
- j) Ensure prosecution files are completed to the required standard and are timely.
- k) Increase percentage of convictions.

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 particularly applies to Staff within The Online Child Abuse Investigation Team (OCAIT), BCU CID and Public Protection Units, front-line Police Officers and staff. The Chief Officer lead for this policy is the Assistant Chief Constable responsible for Crime, Intelligence & PPU.

This is a non-statutory policy that sets out the principles to help guide decision making. It provides guidance that, on occasions, officers and staff may depart from based on the particular circumstances they encounter. On such occasions, officers and staff will be supported provided they can demonstrate a clear rationale which can be objectively justified for why they have departed from the policy.

Outcomes and Evaluation

Outcomes will reflect specific objectives and be measured against these objectives on a routine annual basis. Responsibilities and activities involved in measurement will be determined by the Head of Investigations.

Legislation around Indecent Images of Children is subject to regular revision. Merseyside Police will further update this local policy in line with the introduction of any new legislation, which could be prior to the documented review date.