



# **Guidelines for Dealing with Child Protection**

## **Aide Memoire for Operational Officers**

*“Criminal investigations relating to child abuse are the responsibility of the police”*

### **Information required when taking an initial report of child abuse:**

- Identity and contact details of the person reporting and the capacity in which they are reporting, e.g. neighbour, teacher;
- Nature of the incident or concern;
- Location of the incident;
- Location and identity of the child victim;
- Location and identity of any suspect;
- Are the parties injured; if so, severity of any injury and whether medical assistance is required;
- Any other children are present and whether they are safe;
- Location of other parties (other children and witnesses);
- Any weapons have used;
- Identities and details of parties involved, including names (correctly spelt), sex, dates of birth, home address, telephone numbers;
- Whether any person present appears drunk or has taken drugs;
- Whether there is any history of Human services involvement;
- Description of the suspect, if applicable;
- Whether any court orders apply;
- Whether there are any special needs, for example, disability or communication issues;
- Details of the child’s school and Doctor;
- Details of the demeanour of the caller, victim, suspect and witnesses; background noise (including shouting and words spoken);
- A ‘first account’ of what the caller says has occurred (recording it verbatim);

## **Deployment of Officers:**

After despatching officers to the scene, the receiving officer should:

- Ensure that an ambulance is en route if required;
- Ensure that support ('back up') is available for the officer attending the incident if necessary;
- Inform the caller that officers have been despatched;
- Make checks of previous reported incidents, especially those involving children; civil injunctions, court orders relating to child contact, child protection intelligence systems;
- Advise the Duty Supervisor;  
Inform the caller when officers have arrived at the scene so that they can be safely admitted to the premises.

## **Recorded Actions at Scene:**

- Child's name, sex and date of birth;
- Name of the person (s) with parental responsibility and primary carer (s);
- Who was present when the child was spoken to;
- Questions asked of the child;
- Child's responses;
- Description of the child's physical appearance including injuries, clothing and state of cleanliness;
- Any action the officer took to observe the child's physical condition while noting that the examination prevented full observation of the child's body; any none visible injuries can then be accounted for;
- Description of the child's demeanour;
- Description of the child's surroundings, including the condition of the home.
- Confirm the identity of the suspect, (if they are no longer at the scene circulate a full description via the radio system);
- Establish who is or was at the scene;
- Request intelligence checks on the suspect including a warrants check, any bail conditions and civil orders;
- Make accurate records of everything said by all parties, including any 'significant statements' made by the suspect; other witnesses
- Record the demeanour of the suspect and any ;
- Consider using a video camera or camera to record evidence by Scenes of Crime;
- Obtain an overview of what has occurred;

### **Protecting the scene:**

- Secure, preserve and control the scene to limit any access until sufficient information is available to make an informed assessment of the situation;
- Remove people and animals from the identified areas of activity, and where practicable from the whole area;
- Establish physical secondary scene parameters – potentially the whole of the premises, in serious offences;
- Note that the suspect (s) should also be treated as a scene, and other persons at the premises may also be scenes;
- Note that the suspect's actions following the incident may create further sites of forensic interest;
- Dependent upon the severity of the incident, consider erecting cordons and appointing a loggist, to record persons entering and leaving. The extent of an enquiry can always be scaled down;
- Consider any potential areas of contamination that could affect the integrity of evidential material;
- Request that a Scenes of Crime Officer attends or record the reasons why one was not requested or did not attend;
- Establish a work base in a safe area of the premises;
- Ensure the scene is photographed or videoed, where necessary, as soon as possible;
- Note that the victim is the primary scene and should be treated as such. The first concern of the officer should be the child's safety, state of mind and their ability to cope with forensic requests (this is dependent upon the age of the child concerned, their understanding and the nature of the alleged incident).

### **Immediate actions in cases of sudden and unexpected death of an infant:**

- Request urgent medical assistance, if not already done;
- If the first response officer is not a Detective officer of at least Inspector rank, arrangements should be made for such an officer to attend the scene to take charge of the investigation, if not already done;
- Record information about emergency services that have attended the scene and details of any conversations that took place;
- Record details of the child's condition, e.g. position, any vomit, blood from the nose or mouth, colour, tone, consciousness, any signs of movement or breathing;
- Record the surrounding circumstances of the discovery of the child, e.g. who was present when the child was found, how the child was found and who alerted the emergency services;
- Record the condition of the child's surroundings;
- Record the response of the parent or carer;
- Explain to the parent or carer that the police need to take actions to determine the cause of the child's death, such as asking particular questions and possibly examining some items from the house.

**Minimum information the Family Protection Teams require for notification:**

- Name of the officer making the notification and their contact details;
- Name and sex of the child (and any previous names);
- Date of birth of the child;
- Current address and previous addresses of the child;
- Mother's name, date of birth and address, cohabitee name and date of birth;
- Father's name, date of birth and address, cohabitee name and date of birth;
- Name, date of birth and address of any other person with parental responsibility;
- Details of other children in the household including name, sex and date of birth;
- Name, date of birth and address of the suspect;
- Nature of concern;
- Copies of any relevant notes / records;
- Name and contact details of the child's Doctor and school attended;
- Details of actions taken by police or other agencies (if known) and the reason for them;
- Results of checks of intelligence systems, records, force control room records for any crimes and other incidents recorded in respect of relevant addresses and individuals.

**Family Protection Teams: North (Pending)**  
**South 456 3937**

*Supt P Mulligan April 2007*