

Children and Young People who Sexually Abuse Other Children

**Multi-Agency
Protocol 3**

Introduction

When concerns arise that a child or young person may have sexually abused another child, a number of different agencies may become involved at different stages. Each agency will have a different role to play in responding to these concerns. However, underpinning the involvement of all agencies is a recognition that children and young people who sexually abuse other children are “children in need” and their sexual offending should be viewed in the context of their wider experience of needs.

Whilst not all these children and young people will be children in need of protection themselves this protocol emphasises the need for an inter-agency risk management strategy in every situation.

Investigation

There are a number of ways in which concerns that a child or young person may have sexually abused another child will come to light. These will range from concerns about sexualised behaviour in prepubescent children to a specific allegation of sexual assault made by one young person against another.

This protocol is primarily aimed at ensuring a multi-agency response to specific allegations of sexual assault. However more generalised concerns about sexualised behaviour in children and young people should always be taken seriously. These situations are likely to benefit from a multi-agency response which supports the family and the child in developing a clear understanding of the causes of this behaviour.

When a specific allegation of sexual assault is made, there are a number of enquiries which need to be made in order to ensure an appropriate and safe response to the allegation.

The primary question which needs to be addressed through these enquiries is whether the alleged perpetrator and/or the alleged victim have suffered or are likely to suffer significant harm. For this reason all such allegations should be considered under the umbrella of [Section 47 Enquiries](#) (for further information about the purpose and process of [Section 47 Enquiries](#) see Chapter 2).

All such allegations should therefore be referred either to the local Children and Families Team of Social Services or to the Police. On receipt of this referral the procedure for conducting a [Section 47 Enquiry](#) as outlined in Chapter 2 should be followed.

There are particular points which should be borne in mind when conducting a [Section 47 Enquiry](#) following an allegation of sexual assault by a young person. These are as follows:

- There will be circumstances in which the initial information received either by the Police or Social Services may lead either agency to conclude that a [Section 47 Enquiry](#) is unnecessary e.g. consensual underage sexual

intercourse (USI). However this decision should always be made in the context of a strategy discussion between the Police and Social Services to ensure that both agencies are in agreement with [Section 47](#) Enquiries not being pursued.

- The Strategy Discussion will need to decide whether the [Section 47](#) Enquiry should be conducted by Social Services and the Police together or by Social Services alone. It is important that this decision is made on the basis of the fullest possible information available as a single agency investigation may jeopardise future criminal proceedings.
- If the child or young person is over the age of 10, the Youth Offending Team should be consulted at the early stages of the [Section 47](#) Enquiry in view of their potential future involvement with the child or young person.
- The [Section 47](#) Enquiry needs to be completed both for the alleged perpetrator and for the child victim. [2 CP1 Forms](#) (The format for recording the process for the [Section 47](#) Enquiry) should be completed by the Fieldwork team.

When completing the [Form CP1](#) for the alleged perpetrator, brief information about the following should be obtained.

Information about child or young person

Known sexual history of sexual offending behaviour, known previous history of victimisation, young person's initial attitude to the offences, motivation to engage in further work, degree of acceptance of responsibility for the offending behaviour **NB** some level of denial is very likely and at this stage does not indicate a particular cause for concern.

Information about family

Parent or carers understanding of and attitude towards the offending behaviour. Parent or carers willingness and ability to protect siblings and engage in assessment and management strategies.

Siblings wishes and feelings and extent of vulnerability.

Contact with other networks

Schooling history and any other behavioural concerns. Young person's contact with children through other activities.

While the Fieldwork team hold responsibility for gathering this information, a significant contribution is likely to be made by the investigating Police Officer and/or the Youth Offending Team if they supported the young person through the interview process.

AFTER THE INVESTIGATION

A debriefing discussion should be held at the end of the [Section 47 Enquiries](#) which should consider:

- The need for an immediate protection plan
- Whether interviews of other children are required.
- Any further action by the police.

As with all [Section 47 Enquiries](#), there are 3 possible outcomes which can be decided upon by the investigating managers from Police and Social Services.

- **Concerns are not substantiated**

In circumstances where neither the perpetrator nor the alleged victim are considered to have suffered significant harm no further action may be necessary.

However consideration should always be given to whether or not the alleged perpetrator or the alleged victim is in need and what support and services may be needed to enable the family to promote the children's welfare. A Core Assessment may be considered to be helpful.

- **Concerns are substantiated but the child is not judged to be at risk of significant harm.**

This outcome is particularly likely if the alleged victim is not in the same family as the alleged perpetrator.

This outcome may also be reached for the alleged perpetrator if the concerns about the alleged assault are substantiated but no concerns have arisen during the [Section 47 Enquiry](#) to indicate that the young person is at risk of significant harm. In these circumstances further involvement with the young person and his or her family is likely to be necessary (see Planning a Core Assessment)

For either of the above two outcomes, a multi-agency planning meeting is a useful way of identifying each agency's contribution to assessment and service provision.

- **Concerns are substantiated and the child is judged to be at continuing risk of significant harm**

This outcome is likely to be reached if the alleged perpetrator and the alleged victim are in the same family and a satisfactory protection plan is not able to be put in place to ensure the victim or siblings continued protection.

This outcome will also be reached if the [Section 47 Enquiry](#) concludes that the alleged perpetrator is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm. **NB** committing a sexual offence is not in itself an indicator of risk of significant harm but the behaviour may be linked to the young person's own

experience of victimisation which should be explored through the [Section 47 Enquiry](#).

If it is concluded that either the alleged victim or alleged perpetrator are at continuing risk of significant harm, a Child Protection Conference must be convened within 15 working days of the initial Strategy Discussion.

DISPOSAL OF THE OFFENCE

Once the Police have completed their enquiries and the young person has been interviewed regarding the alleged offence, consultation should take place between the Police, Social Services and the Youth Offending Team regarding the most appropriate disposal of the offence. This consultation should draw on information gathered during the [Section 47 Enquiry](#) process about the nature and context of the offence including information about any aggravating factors which should inform this decision.

PLANNING A CORE ASSESSMENT

In relation to the young perpetrator and family.

If concerns relating to the allegation of sexual assault are substantiated, a core assessment is likely to be necessary.

The Fieldwork team will take the lead in planning and co-ordinating the Core Assessment. However the Youth Offending Team will be able to contribute significantly to the Core Assessment if they have an involvement with the young person.

The role of all agencies should be negotiated at an initial planning meeting to set up the Core Assessment.

In undertaking a Core Assessment of a young person who has sexually abused a child there are particular areas which need to be covered. These are listed under the three domains of the Assessment triangle.

Child's Developmental Needs

It is particularly important to gain an understanding of the young person's emotional, social and sexual development and the impact of their life experience on this development.

Areas to consider include:

- Full sexual history, knowledge and attitudes. **NB** This component should include sexual health issues.
- Young person's experience of sexual victimisation and ability to make connections between victimisation and offending behaviour.
- Young person's experience of other kinds of intra familial or extra familial violence or oppression including Domestic Violence.
- Significant attachments
- Self esteem

- Non-sexual behavioural difficulties
- Young person's understanding of the offending behaviour.
- Selection
- Planning
- Use of sexual thoughts/fantasies
- Nature and degree of control used to get compliance
- Nature of sexual offence and level of match between sexual exposure and victim's statements.
- Cognitive distortion; minimisation, justification, rationalisation, pattern of sexual offending behaviour; frequency, speed of repetition, progression of severity.
- Victim Awareness and Empathy

Parenting Capacity

This element of the Core Assessment should explore the following:

- Parental attitude to the offending behaviour
- Parental attitude to the young person in the light of this offending behaviour.
- Parental perception of the risk which the young person presents to other children in the family and their capacity to protect.
- Family history and current relationships with particular reference to the role and position of the young person in the family. Has the young person witnessed or experienced Domestic Violence?
- Sexual attitudes and boundaries in the family.

Family and Environmental Factors

This area of the Core Assessment should include the following:

- Siblings' attitudes to the young person and their behaviour and their perception of the risk of further offending.
- School – relationships with peers, behaviour patterns, educational potential/achievement.
- Involvement in other activities, contact with children.
- Support networks for young person who can contribute to the management of risk.

It is recognised that not all this information will be able to be obtained within the timescale of 35 working days for completion of the Core Assessment. The analysis and planning stage of the Core Assessment should identify the following:

- Further areas of work required in order to obtain an accurate assessment of future risk.
- A risk management strategy which includes recommendations regarding schooling and placement decisions.
- The needs of substitute carers if the young person is living away from his or her family. This should include specific consideration to the needs of siblings and other children who are in this placement.