

<b>Title:</b> <b>Organised and Complex Abuse</b>		 <p>Salford Safeguarding Children Board</p> <p>Keeping children safe IN Salford</p>	
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This should be read in conjunction with the Home Office and Department of Health 2002 Guidance "Complex Child Abuse Investigations: Inter Agency Issues".

## 1. Definition

Complex (organised or multiple) abuse may be defined as abuse involving one or more abusers and a number of related or non-related abused children. The abusers concerned may be acting in concert to abuse children, sometimes acting in isolation, or may be using an institutional framework or position of authority to recruit children for abuse.

Such abuse occurs both as part of a network of abuse across a family or community and within institutions such as schools, residential settings, in day care and in other provisions such as youth services, sports clubs and voluntary groups. There will also be cases of children being abused via the use of the Internet.

## 2. Investigation

Each investigation of organised or multiple abuse will be different, according to the characteristics of each situation and the scale and complexity of the investigation. All will require thorough planning, good inter-agency working and attention to the welfare needs of the child victim or adult survivor involved.

Complex abuse occurs both as part of a network of abuse across a family or community, and within institutions such as residential homes or schools. Such abuse is profoundly traumatic for the children who become involved. Its investigation is time-consuming and demanding work requiring specialist skills from both police and social work staff.

Some investigations become extremely complex because of the number of places and people involved, and the timescale over which abuse is alleged to have occurred. In these circumstances a specialist Investigation Management Group (see [Section 7](#)), as well as a Strategic Management Group (see [Section 6](#)) may be set up.

The complexity is heightened where, as in historic cases, the alleged victims are no longer living in the setting where the incidents occurred or where the alleged perpetrators are also no longer linked to the setting or employment role.

The confidentiality of the information relevant to any [Child Protection Enquiry] and criminal investigation must be strictly maintained by those involved and must not be disclosed to others, including others within the agency, unless absolutely necessary.

### 3. The Child

The single and most important consideration is the safety and well-being of the child or children.

In reconciling the difference between the standard of evidence required for child protection purposes and the standard required for criminal proceedings, emphasis must be given to the protection of the children as the prime consideration.

The investigation and enquiries must also address the ethnic, religious, cultural, language, sexual orientation and gender needs of the child, together with any special needs of the child arising from illness or disability.

### 4. Referral

Any practitioner who receives information which may indicate organised or multiple abuse should immediately refer the matter to Children's Social Care – see the *Referrals Procedure*.

If there is any suspicion that any person currently employed by a Safeguarding Children Board partner agency or volunteering is implicated, the matter should be referred under the *Managing Allegations Against Adults who Work with Children Procedure*.

### 5. The Strategy Meeting

A Strategy Meeting should then be arranged to take place as a matter of urgency to assess the need for future action to be taken under this procedure. This will be in addition to the usual agenda for a Strategy Meeting – see *Strategy Discussion/Meeting Procedure*.

The Strategy Meeting, chaired by a senior manager from Children's Social Care, must be held within 5 working days of the receipt of the referral and be formally recorded.

Children’s Social Care and the Police will nominate senior staff to attend this meeting. The meeting will also involve nominated senior staff from Health, Education and other agencies as required and, where necessary, ensure coordination across local authority boundaries as well as Police force boundaries.

The Strategy Meeting needs to identify:

- Names of all possible abusers and their known networks
- The children named
- The children who may be in current contact with possible abusers
- Children who were, but no longer are, in contact with possible abusers
- Possible victims who are now adults
- Witnesses to be interviewed prior to the interviews of children

The Strategy Meeting will also need to agree the nature and form of interviews.

In addition, the Strategy Meeting will need to decide whether the social work input into the enquiries/investigation can be managed in the conventional way or whether a specialist approach is required, for example from a dedicated team outside the service. This will usually depend on the number, geographical spread and age range of potential interviewees, as well as whether those implicated are foster carers, volunteers or employees of any member agency.

Where the Strategy Meeting confirms that the investigation will relate to organised or multiple abuse, it will decide that a Strategic Management Group (see **Section 6**) will be established to oversee the process.

Where a member of staff of any Salford Safeguarding Children Board agency is implicated in the investigation, his or her line manager must not be a member of the Strategic Management Group.

## **6. The Strategic Management Group**

The Strategic Management Group will be chaired by a senior officer ( Assistant Director or Head of Safeguarding from Children’s Social Care and will:

- Complete the mapping process started by the Strategy Meeting as set out in **Section 5**
- Specify the terms of reference for the enquiry/investigation
- Establish the strategic lead agency/agencies in the investigation
- Bring together a team of people with the necessary training, experience and objectivity to manage and conduct the criminal investigation and/or [Child Protection Enquiry] on a day to day basis. NB: Line managers or colleagues of any person implicated in the investigation must not be involved and the involvement of any person from the workplace under investigation must be considered with particular care. Membership may need to be reviewed should additional implicating information come to light
- Review the need for an independent team to investigate the allegations, particularly where the alleged perpetrators are foster carers, prospective adopters or members of staff employed by a member agency of the Salford Safeguarding Children Board.
- Decide the terms of reference and accountability for the investigating team, including the parameters and timescales of their enquiries/investigation
- Where it would assist the coordination of the investigation, appoint an Investigation Management Group (IMG) (see **Section 7**)
- Ensure that appropriate resources are deployed to the investigation including access to legal and other specialist advice, resources and information
- Ensure the investigating team are themselves supported with personal counselling if necessary and that issues of staff safety are addressed
- Ensure that suitable accommodation and administrative support are available for the investigation
- Ensure that an appropriate venue is available for interviews and the interviews are conducted in accordance with [Achieving Best Evidence] Guidance

- Ensure that appropriate resources are available to meet the needs of the children and families or adult survivors, including any specific health issues arising from the abuse.
- Liaise as necessary with the Crown Prosecution Service at an early stage before arranging services for a child in need of counselling or therapeutic help so that the help can be given in a way which is consistent with the conduct of the criminal investigation (unless this would result in undue delay)
- Agree a communications strategy including the handling of political and media issues, and communication as necessary with the [Regulatory Authority] – see **Section 9, Media Handling**
- Ensure that records are kept safely and securely stored and a high level of confidentiality maintained at all times.
- Hold regular strategic meetings and reviews, which must be recorded, to consider progress, including the effectiveness of the joint working, the need for additional resources and next steps

## 7. The Investigation Management Group

Where it would assist the coordination of the investigation, an Investigation Management Group will be appointed.

Membership of this group should include representatives from Children’s Social Care, the Police, Health, local authority legal services with other agencies being invited to participate as appropriate.

The tasks and functions of the Group will be subject to the terms of reference agreed by the Strategic Management Group (SMG), and will include:

- To provide a forum where professionals can meet, exchange information and discuss the implementation of the agreed investigation strategy
- To ensure a consistent strategy for interviewing victims within and outside the local authority’s area
- To keep the SMG informed of resources and any shortfalls
- To ensure a consistent and appropriate inter-agency approach to support victims and their families

- To co-ordinate the inter-agency response to families and provide consistent information
- To ensure information is shared appropriately with other agencies not represented on the SMG or the IMG
- To ensure clarity of roles and responsibilities for staff involved in the investigation. Investigators will have full access to all records and key information.
- To ensure that relevant intelligence is passed between agencies and to the police Major Incident Team [MIT]

## 8. Media Handling

No agency should underestimate the level of media interest in complex abuse investigations. The main task of handling the media should be assigned to a senior manager in each agency who is in close contact with the detail of the investigation.

The Senior Investigating Officer should agree an operational media strategy with the appropriate press office at the commencement of the investigation. It is vital that all statements to the media are cleared, via the Senior Investigating Officer, at the level of the Strategic Management Group, and that consistency is maintained throughout.

Staff must have available to them a clear line of referral for media inquiries in order to ensure that statements are only issued by designated people. Individual agencies should not express independent views as to the conduct of the investigation.

There are many legal restrictions governing what might be said to the media during the course of criminal and/or [Care Proceedings], including any injunctions that might be in force. It is therefore essential that consideration is given to obtaining legal advice before any information is released to the media.

The investigation team should be aware of the potential dangers of uncontrolled or inappropriate media reporting on future criminal proceedings at the investigation stage. Many sensitive cases which have attracted significant media attention at the investigative stage are subsequently the subject of defence submissions on abuse of process and the inability of the defendant to have a fair trial because of the level and nature of media reporting.

It is essential that victims and their families are protected from the potential trauma that may be associated with media interest in their cases. All press releases should avoid identifying victims so that they may be shielded from media attention unless and until they need to attend court.

The Senior Investigating Officer must be made aware of all pre-sentence communications to ensure that the integrity of the prosecution is maintained

## **9. End of Enquiry/Investigation**

At the conclusion of the enquiry/investigation, the Strategic Management Group will refer appropriate cases to the Chair of the Safeguarding Children Board for a decision as to whether the ***Serious Case Review Procedure*** should be implemented.



Record of Changes to Document					
Changes approved in this document by - SSCB Policies and Procedures Sub Group					
Section Number	Date	Amendment ( <i>shown in bold italics</i> )	Deletion	Addition	Reason

## Diversity & Equality Screening Questionnaire

Organisations are legally required to ensure that all new policies and documents are assessed for their impact both positive & negative on equality target groups ; religion/beliefs, disability, age, gender, religion & sexual orientation & transgender.

If you wish to discuss any aspect of this assessment process please contact the Equality Advisor, HR dept.

	<b>Name of policy, document or leaflet;</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Whom is this document or policy aimed at ?</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Is this document a specific user group? if yes, why ? (what are the demographics of your target audience?)</b>  <b>How will you ensure that this policy is cascaded to the target group ?</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Is there any evidence to suggest that different groups have different needs in relation to this policy or document (positive or negative; for example; elderly, patients with disabilities, issues on gender etc) ?</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>If you a revising a policy are any the changes to this policy likely to impact on any groups?</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Have you undertaken any consultation/involvement with service users or other groups in relation to the new policy ?</b>  <b>If yes, what format did this take? face/face or questionnaire? (please attach evidence of this)</b>  <b>Were service users who may require additional support (e.g.</b>

visually impaired) involved ?

Has any amendments been implemented as a result of this exercise?

6 Are you aware if a request has been made for the policy to provided in alternative formats?

If yes, how/was this achieved?

7 Does the document require any decision to be made which could result in some individuals receiving different treatment, care, outcomes to other individuals (could any group be excluded for any reason)?

On what basis would this decision be made ?

Could this impact on any particular group ?

8 Are you aware of any complaints from service users in relation to the application of this policy ?

If yes, how was the issue resolved ?

9 Looking at the above points does this indicate that any of the groups listed below have different needs, experiences or priorities groups in relation to the document ?

	Yes	No	unsure
Age			
Disability			
Gender			
Marital Status			
Racial group			
Religious belief			
Sexual orientation			

Transgender			
Low Income			
<p><b>10 Any additional comments</b>          If any impact has been highlighted by this assessment, you will need to undertake a full equality impact assessment:</p> <p><b>Will this policy require a full impact assessment? Yes/No (delete)</b>          (if yes please contact Equality Advisor, HR for further guidance)</p>			