



# **DARLINGTON**

**Safeguarding Children Board**

## **Organised or multiple abuse procedure and practice guidance**



**As agreed by LSCB: April 2017**

<b>Title</b>	<b>Organised or multiple abuse procedure and practice guidance</b>
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## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 Organised and multiple abuse will be profoundly traumatic for the children who become involved. Investigation of it can be complicated and time-consuming. For these reasons organised and multiple abuse cases require thorough planning, inter-agency cooperation and need to pay particular attention to the welfare needs of the child victims or adult survivors.
- 1.2 This document should be read in conjunction with the Home Office and Department of Health 2002 Guidance '[Complex Child Abuse Investigations; Inter Agency Issues](#)'.

## **2. Definition**

- 2.1 Organised or multiple abuse<sup>1</sup> 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 together to abuse children, sometimes acting in isolation or may be using an institutional framework or position of authority to recruit children for abuse, such as coach, teacher, faith group leader or be in a celebrity position to access and recruit children.
- 2.2 Such abuse occurs both as part of a network of abuse across a family or community and within institutions such as residential settings, boarding schools in day care and in other provisions such as youth services, sports clubs and voluntary groups. There may also be cases of children being abused by the use of electronic devices, such as mobile phones, computers, game consoles etc. which all access the internet and in particular social networking websites or abusing children in order to produce pornographic images for distribution amongst a network of paedophiles, prostitution of/trafficking of children.

## **3. Investigation**

- 3.1 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. But all will require thorough planning, good inter-agency working and attention to the welfare needs of the child victim or adult survivor involved.
- 3.2 The investigation of organised or multiple abuse is time-consuming and demanding requiring specialist skills from both police and social work staff. It usually involves the formation of dedicated teams of professionals and will need consideration of the needs for victims for therapeutic services.
- 3.3 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 as well as the consequent legal proceeding which may add to the timescales of such investigations. In these circumstances a specialist Investigation team, as well as an Executive Strategy may be set up.
- 3.4 The complexity is heightened where, as in historical 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. These will all need to be taken into consideration when working with a child.

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<sup>1</sup> [Working Together To Safeguard Children 2010](#) – paragraphs 6.1 to 6.13 (now archived)

- 3.5 The confidentiality of the information relevant to any Section 47 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.

#### **4. The Child**

- 4.1 The single and most important consideration is the safety and well-being of the child or children with a clear risk management plan in place for each child.
- 4.2 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.
- 4.3 The investigation and enquiries must also address the racial, religious, cultural, language, sexual orientation and gender needs of the child, together with any special needs of the child arising from illness or disability.

#### **5. Referral**

- 5.1 Information or a referral which may indicate organised or multiple abuse, as defined in Section 2 above, may come to the attention of staff in any setting including Children's social care or direct disclosure to the Police or another agency.
- 5.2 The recipient should immediately refer the matter to the Police and their line manager or designated safeguarding lead within their agency who will then inform Children's Social Care.
- 5.3 If there is any suspicion that the individual(s) are currently employed (paid or voluntary) in any agency in the Darlington area in a position of trust, the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) should be informed. The [notifiable incident](#) process should also be followed with consideration given to informing the Chair of Darlington Safeguarding Children Board.
- 5.4 If the referral involves one child and indicates organised or multiple abuse the matter should be discussed at the initial strategy meeting. If the referral indicates it involves one or more abuser and a number of related or non-related abused children, the Assistant Director of Children's Services should be notified.

#### **6. The Initial Strategy Meeting**

- 6.1 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 and, in particular, whether a criminal investigation should take place.
- 6.2 The Strategy Meeting, chaired by a senior manager of Children's Social Care Services, must take place within 5 working days of the receipt of the referral and be formally recorded.
- 6.3 The nominated senior staff of Children's Social Care Services and the Police should attend the meeting. The meeting will also involve senior staff from Health, Education and Local Authority Legal and other agencies as required (refer to checklist of agencies – Appendix 2) and, where necessary, ensure coordination across all agency boundaries.

#### 6.4 The Strategy Discussion needs to carefully note and map:

- Assessment of the information known to date:
  - 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;
  - Multiple and simultaneous interviews.
- Decide what further information is required at this stage;
- Make arrangements to gather the information in line with DSCB [Information Sharing protocol](#).
- Establish if / to what extent organised or multiple abuse has been uncovered;
- Undertake an initial mapping exercise to determine the scale of the investigation and possible individuals implicated as well as prepare:
  - Witnesses to be interviewed prior to the interviews of children;
  - Multiple and simultaneous interviews.
- Consider a plan including resource implications, for investigation to be presented to the management and resources strategy group;
- Consider any immediate protective action required
- Agree communications strategy

6.5 A strategic decision will need to be made by senior managers from the involved agencies as to 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.

6.6 This will usually depend on the number, geographical spread and age range of potential interviewees, as well as whether those implicated are foster carers or employees of any member agency.

6.7 Where the Strategy Discussion confirms that the investigation will relate to organised or multiple abuse, it will appoint a multi-agency Executive Strategy.

6.8 Where a member of staff of any agency is implicated in the investigation, his or her line manager must not be a member of the Executive Strategy.

## 7. Executive Strategy

7.1 The Executive Strategy will be chaired by the Assistant Director of Children's Services, Darlington Borough Council and will:

- Complete the mapping process started by the initial Strategy Discussion as set out in Initial Strategy Meeting (Section 6 of this document);
- Specify the terms of reference for the enquiry/investigation;
- Establish ownership of the strategic lead in the investigation;
- Task agency leads to consider resource implications and work together to determine key elements of the investigation including allocation of suitably experienced staff and agency leads for contact and any cross boundary issues.
- Bring together a team of people with the necessary training, expertise and objectivity to manage and conduct the criminal investigation and/or Section 47 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 work place under investigation must be considered with particular care;*

- Decide whether there is a need for an independent team to investigate the allegation, particularly where the alleged perpetrators are foster carers, prospective adopters or members of staff employed by a member agency of Darlington Safeguarding Children Board;
- Decide the terms of reference and accountability for the investigating team, including the parameters and timescales of their enquiries/investigation;
- In cases of greater scale and complexity, appoint a Specialist Investigation Team;
- Ensure that appropriate resources are deployed to the investigation including access to legal and other specialist advice, resources and information and agreement on commissioning additional services;
- 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;
- 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;
- 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;
- Agree the communications strategy (or review if identified at the initial strategy discussion) including the handling of political and media issues, and communication as necessary with the Regulatory Authority;
- 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.
- If suspected abuser is working in a position of trust consider informing the relevant regulatory bodies and Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).

## **8. Specialist Investigation Team**

- 8.1 In cases of considerable complexity and scale, a Specialist Investigation Team will be appointed.
- 8.2 Membership of this group should include representatives from Children's Social Care Services, the Police, Health and local authority Legal Services, with other agencies being invited to participate as appropriate (refer to agency checklist at appendix 2).
- 8.3 The tasks and functions of the Group will be subject to the terms of reference agreed by the Executive Strategy, and will include the following:
- 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 council's area;
  - To keep the Executive Strategy informed of resource implications 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 Executive Strategy or Specialist Investigation Team;
- 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.

## 9. End of Enquiry/ Investigation Meeting and Report

- 9.1 If a suspected abuser is working with children in a child care position, or in the education service, evidence and information should be shared to support disciplinary proceedings and to enable, where appropriate, the referral of suspected abusers to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) and the relevant regulatory bodies, such as HCPC, NCTL etc.
- 9.3 At the conclusion of the enquiry/investigation, the Executive Strategy must evaluate the investigation, identify the lessons learned and prepare an Overview report with recommendations and an Action plan for Darlington Safeguarding Children Board, highlighting any practices, procedures or policies which may need further attention and require either inter-agency or individual agency action plans.

## 10. Further Guidance and References

Darlington Safeguarding Children Board – [Multi-agency Safeguarding Children Procedures](#)

Darlington Safeguarding Children Board - [Notifiable incident Procedure and Practice Guidance](#)

Darlington Safeguarding Children Board - [Procedure for managing allegations and concerns against staff, carers or volunteers](#)

HM Government - [Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015](#)

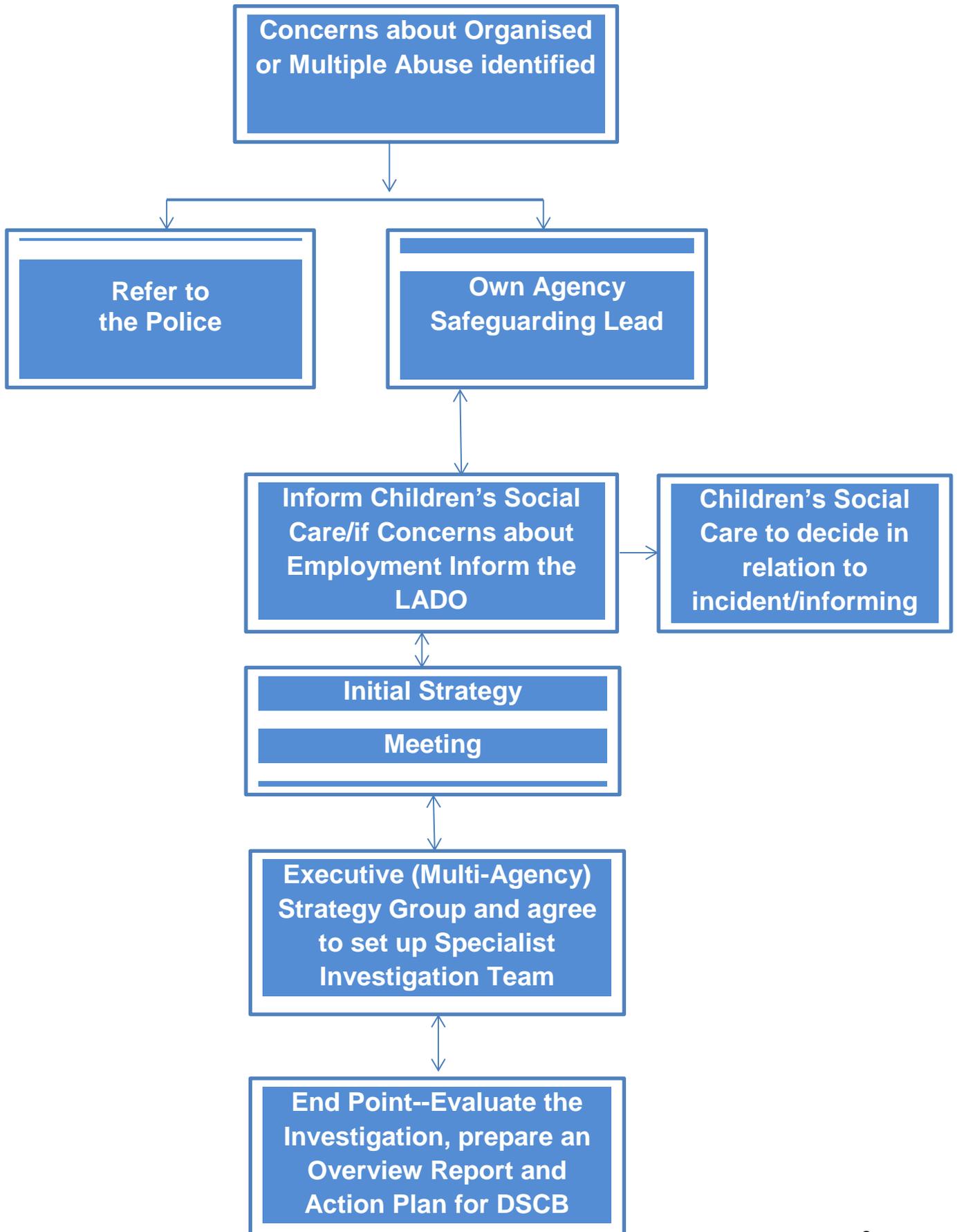
HM Government - [Working Together to Safeguard Children 2010](#) (now archived – references to complex abuse)

Home Office and Department of Health 2002 Guidance '[Complex Child Abuse Investigations; Inter Agency Issues](#)'

Royal College of Policing – [Managing Complex Child Abuse investigations](#)

House of Lords Research Briefings (June 2016) – [Historical Child Sexual Abuse Investigations](#)

**Organised or Multiple Abuse Process Map**



## Checklist of Agencies

Agency	
Darlington Borough Council (DBC)	Children Social Care Adult Social Care Housing Services Youth Offending Service Legal Services
Durham Constabulary	
Education	Schools (Primary and Secondary) Further Education Establishments
Health	Durham and Darlington Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) Primary Care in Darlington NHS England County Durham and Darlington Foundation Trust (CDDFT) Harrogate District Foundation Trust (HDFT) Tees, Esk and Wear Valley Foundation Trust (TEWV) Public Health
National Probation Service (NPS)	North East Division
Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC)	Durham Tees Valley