

Implementation principles for incidents involving children

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children when taking decisions related to Right Care Right Person.

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5 mins read

About these principles

The principles should guide safeguarding partners (integrated care boards (ICBs), local authorities and chief officers of police) when developing, implementing and operating Right Care, Right Person (RCRP) at a local level.

The decision to implement RCRP remains an operational decision for the police. However, this should be undertaken in partnership with all other statutory safeguarding partners and relevant agencies. Those involved in RCRP should consider the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children (anyone aged under 18 years) when taking decisions.

These principles have been developed in consultation with representative bodies for statutory safeguarding partners and relevant agencies.

Responding to incidents involving children

The nature of the incidents that fall within RCRP, where children are involved, generally relate to concern for welfare calls.

At the centre of the RCRP approach is a threshold to assist force control rooms when making decisions about how to respond to calls and incidents. Where a police force decides to apply RCRP to children, these principles highlight the need for additional considerations to be made in any response.

Where children are concerned, the police are also required to consider the best interests of the child when making an assessment of whether they should attend the incident. This also requires

the consideration of any other actions, such as referrals to appropriate safeguarding partners.

For all calls involving a child, either directly or indirectly, the police should exercise caution when making decisions. They should ensure any response to an incident involving a child is in line with local safeguarding partnership agreements.

Principle one – working with safeguarding partners

RCRP does not override existing agreed ways of working between safeguarding partners (ICBs, local authorities and chief officers of police).

If the police are not the most appropriate agency to attend, the response should be based on established local arrangements that have been put in place to ensure the right response by the right agency.

All partners must have a clear understanding of responses to RCRP calls relating to children. This should include:

- a joint risk assessment
- an implementation plan setting out collaborative approaches to developing, agreeing and embedding RCRP

Co-producing local implementation plans for RCRP with all statutory safeguarding partners will ensure that each partner can carry out their role in the RCRP process. This will ensure they have put in place appropriate resourcing and processes.

Where there is no real and immediate threat to life, or no real and immediate risk of harm to a child under [Articles 2 or 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights](#), a police response may still be needed. For example, if the incident requires the use of police protection powers under [section 46 of the Children Act 1989](#).

There may also be a need for an alternative police response, if required, via established joint partnership responses, which may include referrals to the multi-agency safeguarding hub or equivalent.

Statutory safeguarding partners should ensure that the approach includes:

- monitoring and evaluation throughout to assess the impact
- learning and effectiveness of RCRP, in achieving the best response from the most appropriate agency
- ensuring that children are given the right support when they need it

Principle two – child safeguarding at the centre of decision making

All partners should ensure that safeguarding is at the centre of all decision making.

Section 11 of the Children Act 2004 imposes a duty on local authorities, NHS, local policing and others to make arrangements for ensuring that their ‘functions are discharged having regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children’. This means that, in carrying out their role in the RCRP process, all partners must prioritise safeguarding and promote the welfare of the child.

In addition, section 16E of the Children Act 2004 requires safeguarding partners for a local authority area to make ‘arrangements for the safeguarding partners to work together to identify and respond to the needs of children in the area’.

Principle three – ensure the best interests of the child

Those involved in RCRP should consider the best interests of the child when responding to calls concerning children, either directly or indirectly. The best interests of the child should be integral to decision making.

The police may deem there to be no immediate risk of significant harm to the child or others. However, there may still be a need to make referrals to the most appropriate agency, such as local authority children’s social care, to ensure their safeguarding or welfare.

Robust governance structures and escalation processes between statutory safeguarding partners and relevant agencies can help to ensure the best interests of the child are met.

Principle four – treat children as vulnerable

Children are inherently vulnerable. The police must take that vulnerability into account when making an assessment of risk.

Police force RCRP policies should make clear that children are treated as vulnerable. They should outline the additional weight given to the vulnerability factor embedded in the police's assessment of real and immediate risk.

Principle five – the focus must remain on children receiving the right care from the right person

Ensuring children get the right support within the best time frame is key. This requires safeguarding partners delivering on their joint responsibility of working together to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in their local area. This will ensure the best partner is responding to their needs when appropriate.

It is recognised there can be more suitable responses to child safeguarding incidents by specific partners depending on the nature of the incident. Regular reviews of existing service provisions should take place to ensure demand is being met effectively.

Related resources

These principles should be read alongside the following guidance.

- [Right Care, Right Person and the National Partnership Agreement \(Association of...](#)
- [Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 \(HM Government\)](#)
- [Right Care Right Person implementation principle for incidents involving children \(pdf\) 201.73 KB](#)

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