

Child abuse APP – have your say

Published on 12 May 2026

We're consulting on updated guidance for investigating and responding to child abuse

Consultation 2 mins read

We're inviting views on updated authorised professional practice (APP) for child abuse in England and Wales. This is the first formal review of this guidance since 2014.

Why we're updating the guidance

The updated APP brings together two existing documents into a single, coherent resource:

- guidance on investigating child abuse and safeguarding children
- guidance on responding to child sexual exploitation (CSE)

The nature of child abuse has changed significantly over the past decade. Online abuse and certain types of child criminal exploitation, such as 'county lines' offending, have grown rapidly. Our understanding of biases that can affect how children are treated, including 'adultification', has also developed. This guidance reflects those changes.

What's changed

The updated APP supports a victim-centred, suspect-focused and context-led approach. This helps to ensure that children are safeguarded effectively and that offenders are held to account.

The APP has also been restructured to strengthen the framework for multi-agency working, and to provide clear direction for everyone involved in responding to child abuse. This includes roles from call handlers and initial responders, through to investigating officers, supervisors and senior leaders.

The relevant legislation continues to evolve. Both the Crime and Policing Act 2026 and the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026 have now received Royal Assent. The working together to safeguard children statutory guidance was also updated in March 2026.

Any necessary changes to the APP arising from this legislation and guidance will be incorporated as part of this review.

Have your say

Whether you work in policing, a partner agency or a community organisation, or you have personal experience of safeguarding in relation to child abuse, we want to hear from you.

Your feedback on this APP will help policing to address children's needs and achieve the best outcomes in cases of child abuse across England and Wales.

Our consultation closes on 4 August 2026.

To have your say, read the consultation document and complete the online questionnaire.

- [Go to the child abuse APP consultation](#)
- [Complete the online questionnaire](#)

Tags

APP Child abuse Child sexual exploitation