**Referral Criteria – Child Interview Team (North Strathclyde)**

## **Section 1: Inter-Agency Referral Discussion**

1. An inter-agency referral discussion (IRD) is the start of the formal process of information sharing, assessment, analysis and decision-making following reported concern about abuse or neglect of a child or young person up to the age of 18 years, in relation to familial and non-familial concerns, and of siblings or other children within the same context.

The definition of a child or young person within this context describes;

* all children and young people up to the age of 16 years
* Any child subject to a Compulsory Supervision Order up to the age of 18 years
* Professional judgement can be applied to include any child / young person deemed particularly vulnerable aged 16 and up to the age of 18 years (Part 1 of the new National CPC guidance offers definitions of ‘child’ and acknowledges the legal boundaries of childhood and adulthood are variously defined - [www.gov.scot/publications/national-guidance-child-protection-scotland-2021](http://www.gov.scot/publications/national-guidance-child-protection-scotland-2021))
1. IRD is for familial and non-familial abuse or neglect. A key consideration should be impact on the child regardless of relationship.
2. In complex cases, a child protection case discussion (round table IRD) remains best practice and should be arranged, avoiding telephone conferences. The members of this meeting will have equal decision-making authority to that of the IRD.
3. An IRD should be undertaken in respect of the child (ren) or young person referred, however should identify each child or young person within each family specifically on the documentation, considering the risks and safety planning specific to each child or young person individually.
4. An IRD will take place following a request from any of the three core agencies, health, police or social work. It does not require agreement to convene an IRD, simply that one agency is sufficiently concerned and believes **the significant harm (or risk of) threshold has been met**.
5. The expectation is that an IRD should be undertaken no later than the **next working day,** following a child protection referral.
6. In sufficiently complex cases, you can request that the Child Interview Team Coordinator or another member of the team join the IRD conference call or case discussion as way of referral.
7. All IRD’s will consider:
* immediate safety and wellbeing of the child
* the impact or potential impact on the child’s health, wellbeing or safety
* the need for an inter-agency Child Protection Investigation
* the rationale for a single agency investigation and follow-up; or for no further child protection action
* whether or not a medical examination is required; and if so whether this should be a comprehensive medical examination, a specialist paediatric or joint paediatric/forensic medical examination for cases of potential non accidental injury or suspected sexual abuse
* whether compulsory measures may be needed, leading to early referral to the Principal Reporter
1. Whether a joint investigative interview (JII) is required will remain the responsibility of the core IRD participants and will be a primary consideration for the IRD Team.
2. Please refer to your own Local Authority guidance on IRD for full content.

**Section 2: Referral to Child Interview Team**

1. A referral pathway with contact telephone numbers is attached to this document (Appendix 1).
2. Where the Senior Social Worker / Team Manager or Detective Sergeant who initiated the IRD cannot make direct contact with the Child Interview Team Coordinator then the referral form must be fully completed (Appendix 2). **It should be outlined whether consent has been gained from child or young person and/or their parent/guardian along with who will undertake the briefing and debriefing. Gender preference in respect of both interviewers should be actively sought when applicable as outlined in the Victims and Witness Scotland Act 2014 (Section 8). Under the new JII model, every child or young person should be asked his or her gender preference in respect of interviewers.**
3. It is important that the exact wording of what has been said, including the name and role to whom first disclosure has been made is recorded, as interviewers use this for their supportive statements. Where this cannot be provided, then contact information for the individual must be outlined.
4. The child interview team will be responsible for the completion of all three planning tools, scheduling the date and time of interview and communicating with the allocated social worker or Enquiry Officer to minimise a family feeling overwhelmed. Planning documentation and Interview Plan will be sent to Senior Social Worker / Team Manager or Detective Sergeant ahead of briefing.
5. A formal briefing with a Senior Social Worker / Team Manager or a Detective Sergeant should be undertaken before all JIIs and a formal debrief following interview. The briefing is the opportunity for the manager to share with the interviewers’ information from the IRD and the strategy for the child protection investigation. Information about the cause for concern that led to the IRD should be shared with the interviewers. Any key areas to be addressed during the Joint Investigative Interview should be highlighted. The DS / SSW /TM would be expected to highlight information that is known about the child and their family, including any previous contact with the core agencies and previous child protection concerns if there have been any.

Arrangements for further engagement with the manager, either during a break in the interview or following the interview, should also be addressed.

1. The briefing and debriefing paperwork should formally record pre-interview planning discussion and all follow up actions by police and social work in debriefing. Only Senior Social Worker / Team Manager or Detective Sergeant who have been formally trained by National JII Team should undertake this task.
2. Following the interview and alongside the Senior Social Worker / Team Manager or Detective Sergeant, it is essential that interviewers undertake an **analysis** of what the child or young person has said and their presentation during the interview to inform further decision-making and arrangements to protect that individual.
3. The child interview team should have the authority to reconvene the IRD should it consider a discussion is required following the child’s interview. If the JII identified concerns for other children, not involved in the original referral, the debrief should consider the need for an IRD in respect of those children.

**Section 3: Witness Joint Investigative Interviews**

1. The Child Interview Team Coordinator will consider referrals for child witnesses, when it is agreed the case is sufficiently complex and/or the child or young person is assessed to require additional levels of support.
2. Where there are no welfare or protection concerns surrounding the witness and therefore the threshold for initiating an IRD is unmet, a referral to the child interview team can progress without scheduling an IRD. Consideration should be given as to the lead agency who will determine that necessary checks/discussion have taken place with relevant individual(s) and/or partner agencies to ensure child or young person is able to proceed with a JII. Each lead agency should determine their method of recording and decision-making in these circumstances.
3. A referral pathway with contact telephone numbers is attached to this document (Appendix 1).
4. Where direct contact cannot be made with the Child Interview Team Coordinator then the referral form must be fully completed (Appendix 2).
5. Social work will create an electronic file for any child or young person who has been subject to a JII, outlining a case note advising the individual has undertaken a joint interview via the Child Interview team with the sole purpose child or young person deemed as a witness.

**Section 4: Procurator Fiscal Requests**

1. Consideration should always be given to an IRD where the child or young person has been witness to a suspected crime (where they themselves could be assessed as being at significant risk of harm) and request for a JII has come from PF. It is important that opportunity be afforded to all key participants in an IRD to determine if interviewing a child or young person would be detrimental to their wellbeing where the alleged crime may have taken place a significant period before the request is made.
2. Where an IRD previously took place in respect of the same alleged crime for the PF request, careful consideration should be given as to the assessment undertaken at the time. Again, if the threshold for significant risk of harm is unmet and there is no reason to consider point 1 of this section then referral can progress to child interview team without scheduling an IRD.
3. Where an IRD is held, there is no reason to initiate child protection procedures if this action was previously taken or participants of the IRD agree that significant risk of harm now or in the future is not present.
4. A referral pathway with contact telephone numbers is attached to this document (Appendix 1).
5. Where direct contact cannot be made with the Child Interview Team Coordinator then the referral form must be fully completed (Appendix 2).
6. If a PF request relates solely to a witness where they are deemed the individual that a child or young person has made their first disclosure to and there are no welfare or protection concerns surrounding that witness, then please refer to Section 3.

**Appendix 1**

North Strathclyde Child Interview Team – Referral Process

**Interagency Referral Discussion (IRD)**

In complex cases the IRD lead can invite the Coordinator or identified team member to join the IRD discussion by way of referral

**Emergency JII**

In urgent cases a JII can be arranged prior to the IRD if delay places the child / young person at further risk. An agreement should be reached by Police DS and SW manager.

**Child Interview Team Contact:**

**0141 305 4635**

**or**

**0141 305 4637**

DS or SSW / TM will contact Coordinator,

IRD must take place following JII

IRD identifies either DS or SSW / TM who will contact Coordinator, timeously followed up by copy of IRD sent to coordinator for background information.

JII allocated in timely manner

Allocated interviewers undertake planning documents, including support arrangements for child.

Relevant others contacted as part of this process.

**Cheryl Mitchell – Child Interview Team Coordinator**

**07800 629564**

**Cheryl2.mitchell@eastrenfrwshire.gov.uk**

Allocated and/or Investigating Local Authority Social Worker observes interview / views VRI

Feedback to Local Authority verbally, followed by completed paperwork. Any need for further interview will be identified at debrief and possible re-convening of IRD for local SSW / TM / Police DS to consider.

**Appendix 2**



**North Strathclyde Child Interview Team – Referral Form**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Referrer: | \*\*  |
| Local Authority/Division: | \*\* |
| IRD Date: | \*\* |
| Name of Child/YP & DOB: | \*\* |
| Address: | \*\* |
| Allegation/Concern: | \*\* |
| Additional Info: (additional needs, key considerations) | \*\* |
| Parent/Carer Name: | \*\* |
| Telephone Number: | \*\* |
| Siblings to be interviewed: | \*\* |
| Allocated Social Worker / Enquiry Officer: | \*\* |
| Contact Number: | \*\* |
|  |  |
| JII Team |   |
| Allocated to: |  (completed by Child Interview Team Coordinator) |
| Provisional JII Date: |  (completed by Child Interview Team Coordinator) |
| Venue Proposed: |  (completed by Child Interview Team Coordinator) |
| Notes:(Enquiry Officer details, which TM/DS is undertaking brief/debrief. TM details where Police have referred, consent & gender preference) | \*\* |

**All with \*\* must be completed by referrer**