

**Child Sexual Abuse, Internet Sexual Offending – Crib Sheet**

**What we need to know from parents/carers?**

Below are a list of questions to ask parents/carers to establish what level of intervention is required at MASH referral stage. Be mindful that this might be the first time that parents/carers are made aware of any investigation or arrests relating to Child Sexual Abuse, and this could impact on the answers they provide.

Sometimes it is felt more appropriate to call them back after a period of time to give them time to make some sense of what has been said.

Where the offender is a partner: Remember the parent, you are calling has just had their world turned upside down and remember they have most likely been a victim too, as have the children and they need to be seen and treated as such. They will have likely suffered coercive control, lies, deceit, everything about their life at that moment in time may feel a lie, they have been cheated by the person they love… hold all this in mind when talking to the families.

We MUST hold this in mind through the call, show empathy and non-judgement and give assurance.

Some questions are more relevant where the offender is not a parent and not directly in the home, questions will need to be considered re appropriateness when this is a partner versus a uncle/aunt (remember whilst men are more likely perpetrators of child sexual abuse, this is not a gendered crime and woman abuse too)

* **How do you feel about the information that you have heard?**
* **Is this a good time for you to talk? Would you like me to call you back?**
* **Tell me about your relationship with [Name] (if not partner)?**
* How often do you or the children see [name] *(At this stage you may have already been able to gain an understanding of how the parent/carer feels about this person now they are aware that they have been arrested)*
* **What does contact look like, when the children see [name], are they alone, with others?** *(if they say it has always been supervised, what does this look like? Supervision is very different to somebody always being in the house at the same time, also who was the person supervising? When would they next be seeing that person if they do have contact?)*
* **Can you recall any occasions where the children may have been left alone [name] (this is important in contact offences)** *(As parents/carers can often be in denial or do not want to think about it, it is a lot to take in, so explain why this question is needed, be open, is useful to then prompt that research tells us that CSA can happen very quickly in short spaces of time and in various ways)*
* **What level of contact do you intend to have going forward now you know this information about the person?** *(How do you plan to manage it? Do you need any help with this)*
* **Do you understand the link between people who look at images on the internet and those who abuse children?** *As a parent, you need to consider that they may be or have been a risk to your children in the past.* ***Research is very mixed as to the likelihood of crossover – some may present a contact risk and some may not***
* **Have you thought about what you might tell your children about what has happened?** *(Pros and cons – If they do tell the children, identify a person who they can go and speak to if they need to and do they need any support in doing this?)*
* **How would you go about telling them?** *(See below for safety planning and that there are pros and cons regarding telling children and all situations are different, however there are many pros to doing this and do they need any support in doing this, it doesn’t have to be a social worker and can be early help support)*

***Please note:***

Parents/Carers may also say that they know when there is something wrong with their child, or they can speak to them about anything. It is important to tell the parent/carer that children very rarely disclose about things that may have happened to them and this may nothing to do with their relationship with the child, this is because they may not know how to tell, may be scared or confused about what happened, or may worry about the implications of telling on them and their family.

Parent also need to be re-assured that they are not to blame, offender of this kind are opportunities, manipulates and they should not feel guilty – ensure they feel supported and know where to go for support.

Lucy Faithful Foundation has a public forum for Friends & Family affected by IIOC or communication offences [Family and Friends Forum](https://get-help.stopitnow.org.uk/family-and-friends/family-and-friends-forum). There is support out there.

As a practitioner, in preparation of the call read this: <http://www.notaprevention.co.uk/2020/07/10/but-they-must-have-known-the-perspective-of-a-non-offending-partner-of-a-man-convicted-of-downloading-indecent-images-of-children/> It will ensure you had some understanding of what the parent/carer may be feeling.

Preparing for the call is key.

**Questions to ask Police – Even when the investigation is at very early stages, there are still questions that can be asked the officer in charge** **which can help with risk assessment:**

* What exactly is the offence they have been arrested for? What does their evidence look like?
* What other concerns which have come to light? (e.g. concerning web chat, links with other people of concern on line, inappropriate ‘Google’ searches)
Do Police have any idea at this stage whether there has been any sharing of indecent images by the person of concern? (whether they have viewed images or shared can change risk level)
* Is there a specific age and gender of the children within the images which have been viewed by the person of concern? Any patterns of the types of imagery?
Any evidence or reason to believe that any of the children involved in the referral are subjects to any of this indecent imagery?
* What support/information are they looking to share with parent (especially where the offender is a parent).

**Safety planning**

One thing which we often do not explore with parent/carers, is how to go about telling the children about the arrest or conviction. This is because it is often deemed an uncomfortable conversation, or parents do not feel that the children need to know or are too young to understand. A conversation with parents/carers about this is vital because there are pros and cons to informing children about this risk.

* Sexual abuse is often about ‘secrets’ and not telling people what is really going on, so it is important to be open and honest with children as well as all family members they have contact with.
* Protective behaviours work is often completed with children, but they don’t necessarily know why they are doing this because we don’t tell them. Introducing information about what has happened in an age appropriate way provides an opportunity for them to speak about anything which could have been worrying them or make a disclosure. Also, safety is likely to be increased if the child knows what it is that people are worried about, and are given permission to share concerns they may have going forward. News about someone being arrested for indecent images may spread through the community or on social media – it is better for children to find out this information from a trusted adult, than to hear about it ‘in the playground’.
* But it is the parent’s decision whether or not they tell their children especially in relation to internet offences, and child’s understanding.
* What support can children’s service offer, if not now, who to call in the future.

**Decision making**

If parents/carers are saying that contact will continue with the person of concern, but will be supervised then a home visit is needed as a minimum to ensure that the appropriate safety planning is put in place and to ascertain whether further assessment is needed.

If parents/carers are concerned that contact has been unsupervised at any time with the person of concern, then safety planning with the parent is needed in the interim prior an Amber MASH being completed and progression to a referral for assessment.

If parents/carers are saying they do not believe the allegations or offences and will continue as normal, then more understanding and work with the parent/carer can be completed over a longer period.

**ALL** referrals of this nature would benefit from receiving links to a website regarding internet sexual offending and the risks:

<https://www.stopitnow.org.uk/concerned-about-the-behaviour-of-another-adult/>

<https://www.parentsprotect.co.uk/>