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VEMT – Vulnerable, Exploited, Missing or Trafficked

Redcar and Cleveland are committed to keeping all our children safe from exploitation

**Child Abduction Warning Notice (CAWN)**

**What is a CAWN?**

The Child Abduction Warning Notice (CAWN) is a tool that can be served quickly to deter potential offenders. Police would serve this notice to disrupt the activities of an adult who repeatedly associates with a young person. It was formerly called a Harbouring Notice.

**What is the purpose of a CAWN?**

The CAWN was initially designed for when a child goes repeatedly missing, to encourage them to return home. However, police now also consider issuing a CAWN when there is intelligence that a child is associating with an adult who may be a risk or frequenting the adults address. The intelligence must come from a reliable source; for instance, when a professional has witnessed the child with this individual. If a parent or carer provides this information, it may also be considered. However, information from an untested source, such as unknown members of the public or anonymous sources does not carry the same weight.

**Who provides consent to serve the CAWN?**

A CAWN must be signed by someone with parental responsibility (PR) for the child before it can be served.

* If a child is in the care of their parents, grandparents or another private care arrangement, and/or subject to Section 20, the CAWN can be served up to 16 years of age and the parents/carers will be asked to consent to the CAWN.
* If a child is subject to an Interim Care Order or a Full Care Order, the CAWN can be served up to 18 years of age and the social worker will be asked to consent to the CAWN.

**Who can a CAWN be served on?**

A CAWN is served on an individual, not an address. However, the individual **must** have an address; it may not be possible to serve a CAWN on a suspect with no fixed abode. If a child is visiting a particular address regularly, CAWNS may be served on all adults living at the address. A CAWN cannot be served on immediate family members, such as parents or siblings. However, it can be served on other relatives, such as an aunt, uncle and cousin. It is not possible to serve a CAWN on another child (an individual under the age of 18 years).

**What happens if a CAWN is requested?**

There must be a quick response from all professionals when pursuing a CAWN, as there is a time limit on the information being live and relevant for police to act on. Ideally, a CAWN should be completed within a few days from the individual being identified.

The lead professional should liaise with Cleveland Police and if it is determined that a CAWN is appropriate, the lead professional should then contact someone with parental responsibility for the child to request their consent. If the local authority has PR, the social worker can sign the MG11 Statement form rather than a family member.

Cleveland Police will then draw up a MG11 Statement form and an officer will visit the family or person with parental responsibility to discuss the CAWN, confirm permission and obtain their signature. Cleveland Police will then formulate the CAWN, which will be authorised to serve by a Detective Inspector. The CAWN will identify the child and their age and instructs the individual that they do not have permission to associate with or to contact the child, including online. It is best practice for police to serve the CAWN either the same day or the next, once consent has been obtained.

**What happens if an individual does not comply with a CAWN?**

The CAWN makes clear that if the individual continues to communicate with the child, they may be arrested and prosecuted under existing legislation, including child abduction legislation. The breach of a CAWN is not a criminal offence in itself but can be used as evidence in criminal proceedings.

**If a child is believed to be with a person against whom a CAWN has been served, Cleveland Police should be contacted.**

**Process for Serving a CAWN**

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**REQUEST FOR A CAWN CAN COME FROM A NUMBER OF SOURCES**

Request from a professional working with the child or family

Police action following an incident or receipt of reliable intelligence

Action assigned by VEMT Practitioners Group (VPG)

Lead Professional to liaise with Cleveland Police to determine if the CAWN is appropriate

* Complex Exploitation Team (CET) – for cases of exploitation
* Missing from Home Coordinators – for children who go missing

Lead Professional to make contact with parent / carer / social worker (if child subject to a care order) to seek consent for a CAWN to be served on named individual

Lead Professional to contact Cleveland Police and provide an update on consent

Cleveland Police to formulate the MG11 statement form and visit parent / carer / social worker to obtain their signature

Cleveland Police to formulate the CAWN and present to Police Inspector for authorisation to serve

CAWN served on the individual within two days of approval

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