



Children's Safeguarding and Family Help

Requests for police checks practice guidance

Camden's Children and Learning Directorate uses relational practice as the foundation for all our work. Our integrative relational practice framework is based on our values, and is designed to help achieve the Directorate's purpose: to work with children, families and communities to make a positive, lasting difference to their futures, so they have the best start in life.

We recognise the impact of structural inequalities on the lives of the children and families we work with and as a service we will embrace inclusive, anti-discriminatory and anti-racist practice based on our values and our mission to champion social justice.

Our practice framework centres on honest and compassionate relationships with those we serve and with each other. It is an expectation that all Directorate policies and procedures are implemented in line with our practice framework, and that any actions within policies and procedures reflect its ethics, values and practice expectations.

Police checks

1. Introduction and legal framework

- In order to promote and safeguard the welfare of children, Children's Safeguarding and Family Help (CSFH) has the authority to request a 'police check' on parents, relatives and other individuals who have substantial access to children.
- The information that is passed onto CSFH is taken from the individual's police record. Only information necessary for social work purposes will be disclosed from the police record, for example, information that could affect the welfare of a child.
- Under the London Safeguarding Children Partnership procedures, the Child Abuse Investigation Team (CAIT) will share information from the Police National Database (PND) in relation to:
 - intra-familial abuse
 - professional abuse (those working with children)
 - other (alternative) carers (for example family and friends carers).
- The situations where information may be shared are as follows:
 - as part of an on-going section 47 enquiry: (police will share information during the strategy meeting);
 - during an initial assessment, in order to decide whether there is enough evidence to justify carrying out a section 47 enquiry;
 - during a section 17 assessment where the request is proportionate and necessary and social workers can justify why the checks need to be made immediately rather than wait for a DBS check to be completed;
 - where CSFH need to place a child with a family member or friend in an emergency and has obtained the necessary consent;
 - where the child is subject to a child protection plan;
 - as part of an inter-agency risk management meeting (MAPPA);
 - where a child is being placed with a family member in an emergency.
- Other requests on CIN cases including section 7 reports must be made via Legal Services and these can take up to 15 days to process.
- The police may have already carried out checks on the individual during their own child protection risk assessment following an incident to which they have been called. The outcome of these checks will be attached to their Merlin form.
- Under the London Safeguarding Children procedures on sexually active children, social workers may request information from the Metropolitan Police

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about the sexual partner of any young person under the age of 18 where there are concerns that the child is being sexually exploited. [PG38. Sexually Active Children \(london safeguarding children procedures.co.uk\)](https://www.london.gov.uk/childrens-services/child-protection/sexual-exploitation)

2. Obtaining information for Section 47 enquiries and assessments

- If a social worker who is carrying out an assessment of a child has reason to believe that an individual may pose a significant risk to the welfare of a child, a request for a police check may be made to the Police Child-Abuse Investigation Team (CAIT). A request can only be made under the circumstances listed in section 1.4 of this policy.
- The CAIT may also carry out checks on individuals that a child is going to live with, but only where the child is being placed with that person in an emergency, or if the child is subject to a child protection plan. A full DBS check (see section 4) should be taken out on that individual as part of their carer assessment.
- Before a request for a police check is made, the social worker should inform the individual about whom the police check relates but their consent is not required under the Children Act 1989.
- However, the individual should not be informed about the check being taken out if this would place a child or any other person at risk of harm.
- The social worker should obtain the written authorisation of the manager or senior practitioner before a request for a check is made to the police. The manager/senior must record their authorisation in the case notes on the child's MOSAIC case file. The reasons for making a request for a police check must also be recorded.
- Requests for information from the CAIT must be made on Form 87b Child Protection Enquiry Information Request available at: <https://ascpractice.camden.gov.uk/media/3884/updated-87b-v7.docx>
- This should be completed by the social worker and signed by the manager or senior practitioner. The CAIT must be given clear reasons for the purpose of the police check in order to be satisfied that the check is an essential element of the child protection enquiry. The completed form should be sent to: CNMailbox-SafeguardingReferrals@met.police.uk
- The CAIT may disclose information verbally if the case is urgent, but all disclosures must be provided in writing. Normally, the CAIT will record the outcome of checks on the Merlin form. Social workers may record information that is provided verbally in the confidential case note type (as this restricts

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access) and the form should be filed in the confidential section of the child's MOSAIC case record.

3. Sharing the outcome of police checks

- Information is provided by the CAIT on the basis that it is confidential and only to be used for child protection purposes. It may only be shared with third parties with the express permission of the police.
- If social workers believe that information obtained from the police search should be shared with others in order to protect the child, they should discuss this with a member of the CAIT in the first instance.

4. Checks on family and friends carers and private foster carers

- Under section 115 of the Police Act 1997, all alternative carers who look after a child away from home must undergo an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check to ensure that any child who is placed with them will be living in a safe and suitable environment. Alternative carers include private foster carers and family and friends carers.
- DBS checks are separate from police checks and are carried out by Business Support Officers as part of the carer's assessment by the fostering team.
- However, as DBS checks can take some months to be completed, police checks can be taken out by the allocated CSFH social worker whenever a child needs to be placed with a family and friends carer as a matter of urgency.
- The carer should be informed that the check is being taken out but their consent is not required under the Children Act 1989.