

The Scottish Child Interview Model for Joint Investigative Interviewing

In Scotland, child victims and witnesses of violence, abuse, exploitation, and neglect are now being offered a trauma-informed forensic interview that captures key evidence at an early stage, and supports their right to recovery, protection and justice.

Background

The [Evidence and Procedure Review](#) (2015) was a Scottish Courts led research project that has become the key driver behind the development of new approaches to ensure children, and vulnerable adult witnesses, are supported in ways which offer them the opportunity to give their best quality evidence while being protected from further trauma. One of the dedicated workstreams stemming from the Evidence and Procedure Review focused on joint investigative interviews.

A joint investigative interview is a forensic interview conducted jointly by a specially trained police officer and social worker with children who may have been victims or witnesses to a crime and who may be at risk of significant harm. These interviews are visually and audio recorded which means they have the potential to be presented in court proceedings as a form of pre-recorded evidence, reducing the likelihood that the child would be required to give this evidence in person.

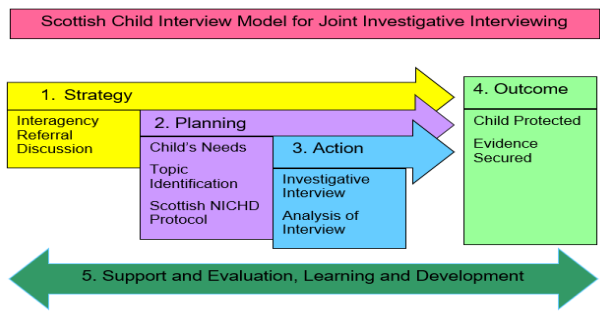
The National Joint Investigative Interviewing Project was established in 2017 with the key aim of developing a new approach to joint investigative interviewing in Scotland. The objective was to build on national and international research and best practice evidence, in order to improve the quality of joint investigative interviews so they could more routinely be used as a form of pre-recorded evidence in court proceedings. A national team, staffed by experienced social workers and police officers sits at the heart of the project, while a range of experts from different disciplines based both in Scotland and abroad, contribute to the work.

The timing of the project meant that all this development work could be closely aligned with [Transforming Psychological Trauma: A Knowledge and Skills Framework for the Scottish Workforce](#) (2017), resulting in the Scottish Child Interview Model being purposefully designed to minimise the risk of re-traumatisation for children.

Model of Practice

The Scottish Child Interview Model is a new approach to joint investigative interviewing which is trauma informed, maintains the focus upon the needs of the child in the interview, and seeks to achieve best evidence through improved planning and interviewing techniques.

The model has five components, all of which must be implemented for the model to deliver the intended benefits to children. This diagram depicts the model:



Learning and Development

A new comprehensive joint training programme for social workers and police officers underpins the new model of practice. Credit rated at [Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework](#) level 9 and formally endorsed by the [Scottish Social Services Council](#) as specialist training for social workers, the new training programme equips interviewers with the specialist knowledge and skills required for the task of forensic interviewing of children.

The interviewer training programme is a mixture of direct teaching and self-study with the initial learning commitment totalling around 50 days. Interviewers access the programme over a number of months and sit a summative assessment to determine competency. Once live in practice, interviewers participate in ongoing robust structured evaluation of practice to support their continuous professional development. This Interviewer Practice Evaluation Framework is a blend of self-, peer-, and manager evaluation and the research base for this can be accessed here: [Evaluation of Interviewer Practice](#).

Quality Standards

A [Quality Assurance and Data Framework for the Scottish Child Interview Model](#) sets out the expected quality standards under each of the five components of the new model. This supports a consistency of quality in the delivery of the model across different areas of the country.

National Strategy

Scotland has 32 local authorities and 13 local policing divisions. This is where the responsibility for forensic interviewing of children sits. All these organisations are currently working towards fully implementing the Scottish Child Interview Model so that all children who require a joint investigative interview will be offered this new approach. The National Joint Investigative Interviewing Team provides implementation support to assist local partnerships in making the changes to their local system that are required to support implementation of the new model. This type of complex change takes several years to fully implement. Progress to date has been excellent and it is expected that the Scottish Child Interview Model will be available to children in all parts of Scotland by the end of 2024.

You can find out more here:

[Joint Investigative Interviews of Child Victims and Witnesses | COSLA](#)