

# BBTA Information – Reporting Child or sexual abuse. – Guidelines JULY 2026

## Duty to report suspected child sex offences

(1) A person aged 18 or over must make a notification under [this section](#) if, in the course of engaging in a relevant activity in England, they are given reason to suspect that a child sex offence may have been committed (at any time).

(2) A notification—

(a) must be made to a relevant police force or a relevant local authority (but may be made to both);

(b) must identify each person believed to have been involved in the suspected offence (so far as known) and explain why the notification is made;

(c) must be made as soon as practicable (subject to subsections [\(5\)](#) and [\(6\)](#));

(d) may be made orally or in writing.

(3) If the person making the notification believes that no relevant child resides in England and Wales, [subsection \(2\)\(a\)](#) applies as if it referred to a relevant police force only.

(4) The Secretary of State may by regulations make provision about the way in which an oral or written notification is to be made.

The regulations may in particular provide that a notification to a police force or local authority is to be made in accordance with any requirements published from time to time by the police force or local authority.

(5) The duty under [subsection \(1\)](#) does not apply to a person in the initial 7-day period if (and for so long as) they reasonably believe that making such a notification would give rise to a risk to the life or safety of a relevant child.

(6) The duty under [subsection \(1\)](#) does not apply to a person in the initial 7-day period if (and for so long as) they reasonably believe that another person will make a notification under [this section](#) in connection with the suspected offence in that period.

(7) The duty under [subsection \(1\)](#) does not apply to a person (P) if—

(a) another person informs P that they have made a notification under [this section](#) in connection with the suspected offence, and

(b) P reasonably believes that the notification has been made.

(8) In [subsections \(6\)](#) and [\(7\)](#), references to another person making, or having made, a notification include that person making or having made it on behalf of the person mentioned in [subsection \(1\)](#).

(9) The duty under [subsection \(1\)](#) is also subject to—

(a) [section 88](#) (exception for certain consensual activities between children);

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(b) [section 89](#) (exception relating to commission of offence under section 14 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003 by a child in certain circumstances);

(c) [section 90](#) (exception in respect of certain disclosures by children);

(d) [section 91](#) (exception for persons providing specified services).

(10) A disclosure made in a notification under [this section](#) does not breach—

(a) any obligation of confidence owed by the person making the disclosure, or

(b) any other restriction on the disclosure of information.

(11) In [this section](#)—

(a) “the initial 7-day period” means the period of 7 days beginning when the person mentioned in [subsection \(1\)](#) is given reason to suspect that a child sex offence may have been committed;

(b) a reference to a person involved in a suspected offence includes, where the suspected offence is under—

(i) [section 1\(1\)\(b\), \(c\) or \(d\)](#) of the [Protection of Children Act 1978](#) (taking etc indecent photograph of child), or

(ii) [section 160](#) of the [Criminal Justice Act 1988](#) (possession of indecent photograph of child),

any person shown in the photograph or pseudo-photograph concerned (other than an imaginary person);

(c) “relevant local authority” and “relevant police force” have the meaning given by [section 86](#).

(12) In this Chapter—

- “child” means a person aged under 18 (and related expressions are to be construed accordingly);
- “child sex offence” means an offence specified in [Part 1](#) of [Schedule 12](#);
- “relevant activity” means—
  - a regulated activity relating to children within the meaning of [Part 1](#) of [Schedule 4](#) to the [Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006](#), or) an activity specified in [Part 2](#) of [Schedule 12](#);
- “relevant child” means a child involved in the suspected offence other than any child who is the suspected offender.