

Risk assessment and risk management by police

Principle 5: Considering children's experiences of intimate partner violence

Expected result: Police officers cooperate with specialised services equipped to identify and assess the risks to children to ensure their protection.

Key elements for considering children's experiences in risk assessment processes

In considering children's experiences in risk assessment processes, police leadership should ensure the following.

Police responsible for conducting risk assessment receive regular and systematic training to develop a sound understanding of children's experiences of intimate partner violence including but not limited to their status as witnesses (on implementing and developing police training, see [Step 4](#)) in collaboration with specialist children's services.

The police identify and respond to the immediate needs of children affected by intimate partner violence, and cases are referred to specialist children's services as appropriate and where available within a multiagency framework (on embedding risk assessment processes and practices in a multiagency framework, see [Step 5](#)).

The adoption of a specialised risk assessment tool with and for children experiencing intimate partner violence is considered. This could be developed and carried out in coordination with specialist services that have competence in identifying and responding to the specific needs of children in cases of intimate partner violence. Police could consider using the Domestic Violence Risk Assessment for Children (97) or the Safe and Together (98) models.

The police should gather information on risk factors affecting children in order to address their specific safety needs.

Children are the largest population of vulnerable victims (95) of intimate partner violence. Children's experiences of intimate partner violence include being exposed in the home, directly or indirectly, to violent or threatening behaviour, including humiliation, intimidation and controlling actions, and are associated with negative outcomes for children, including increased risk of psychological, social, emotional and behavioural problems, as well as risk of lethality.

It is critical to view children and young people as victims of intimate partner violence in their ownright. Their experiences of violence are different from those of their mothers, by virtue of their stage of development, their different relationship to the perpetrator and their level of dependence on adult caregivers. The risks for children should not be assumed to be the same as the risks for the victim. Despite this, children are rarely given opportunities to express their own views, and professionals may be reluctant to involve them in decisions that affect them (96). Including the perspectives of children affected by intimate partner violence should be a priority both in the direct work of the police with victims and perpetrators and in the wider intervention system and cooperation with other agencies.

Risk assessment should therefore be child competent in that it routinely and robustly takes into account the impact of abuse on children and informs risk management strategies that address their individual safety needs. A potential implementation of this principle is in accordance with Article 26 on protection and support for child witnesses of the Istanbul Convention.