

## Mandatory reporting of child abuse

Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH) updated

position: August 2023

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### About the RCPCH

The [Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health \(RCPCH\)](#) is responsible for training and examining paediatricians, setting professional standards and informing research and policy. RCPCH has over 19,000 members in the UK and internationally. We work to transform child health through knowledge, research and expertise, to improve the health and wellbeing of infants, children and young people across the world.

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### Additional Use

This document was additionally submitted in full in response to HM Government's [open consultation on the Mandatory Reporting of child sexual abuse](#) on 7 August 2023.

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## At a glance: RCPCH's position on Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse, 2023

A mandatory reporting duty is a duty or obligation, placed on an individual or organisation, to report child abuse to the relevant authority ("mandatory reporting").

The goal of any child protection policy is to ensure that children are protected from harm. An evidence review by the RCPCH has shown that mandatory reporting increases the instances of reported abuse, however there is limited evidence to show that an increase in reports leads to an increase in protection or better outcomes for children.

Outcomes for children depend, at least in part, on the capacity of the system into which reports are made. We must be sure that reported abuse will be investigated and acted upon, and that potential unintended consequences of mandatory reporting do not occur.

The RCPCH is asking the government to consider five key points before considering whether a mandatory reporting duty is best for children in England and Wales. Further detail of each is included in this document:

- 1) All types of child abuse must fall under any mandatory reporting duty;
- 2) A children's rights-based approach must be followed and a children's rights impact assessment must be carried out;
- 3) A Government systems impact assessment must be carried out;
- 4) Measurable outcomes for children must be built into any plans; and
- 5) Clearer definitions must be provided before further consultation.

RCPCH cannot recommend a blanket introduction of mandatory reporting until these recommendations are addressed, however our position statement highlights important strengthening measures which can be applied to existing mechanisms, such as better use of the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) system, increased registration (by regulators) of professionals, and an alignment of standards across the UK regulators in relation to mandatory reporting.

The RCPCH will continue to review this position as further information and evidence becomes available.

# Mandatory reporting: The RCPCH's five key asks

A mandatory reporting duty is a duty or obligation, placed on an individual or organisation, to report child abuse to the relevant authority.

The RCPCH is asking the government to consider the five following key points before considering whether a mandatory reporting duty is best for children:

## 1. All Types of Abuse

Any introduction of a mandatory reporting duty must apply to all forms of child abuse, not individual categories of abuse, so as not to create a 'hierarchy of abuse'.

## 2. Children's Rights Based Approach

The RCPCH recommends that the Government must carry out an assessment of the introduction of mandatory reporting of child abuse, for example using UNICEF's seven principles of a rights-based approach.

## 3. Impact Assessment

In light of evidence that social care systems cannot always respond to the rise in reports when mandatory reporting is introduced, the RCPCH recommends that the Government carries out a full impact assessment in order to better understand how social care systems will adequately respond to child abuse reports.

## 4. Outcomes for Children

Should the Government proceed with mandatory reporting, the RCPCH recommends that clear, defined outcomes for children are identified and built into any proposals so that the result of an introduction of mandatory reporting is monitored to ensure that it is resulting in better outcomes for children, rather than simply an increase in reports.

## 5. Clear Definitions

The Government must establish and clearly define the practical mechanisms which would exist as a part of a mandatory reporting duty including:

- *Thresholds for reporting*
- *Reporting systems*
- *Reporting processing*
- *Abuse types*
- *Thresholds for culpability*

# Full Position- Updated August 2023

## 1. Position Summary

### 1a. Mandatory Reporting definition

1. 'Mandatory Reporting' refers to a duty, placed on an individual or organisation, to report child abuse to the relevant authority. The RCPCH last published a position on the introduction of mandatory reporting in 2015, stating that insufficient evidence was available for the efficacy of mandatory reporting improving outcomes for children. The statement in this document sets out the RCPCH's updated position, considering the findings of the final report of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) (October 2022) and the Government's subsequent call for evidence on an introduction of Mandatory Reporting.
2. The RCPCH acknowledges the extensive evidence shared with the IICSA and commends the survivors and victims for bravely sharing their testimonies. It is imperative that the Government listens and makes a change which will protect children from abuse in the future. It has therefore been important for the RCPCH to consider all of the available evidence in order to determine whether the introduction of mandatory reporting is likely to improve outcomes for children.
3. Based on this threshold, the RCPCH cannot currently recommend that a blanket mandatory reporting duty is introduced. This document sets out our reasons for this in detail.
4. If the Government is to consider the introduction of mandatory reporting, the RCPCH suggests that the following five things ([Figure 1](#)) must first happen in order to ensure that outcomes for children are placed at the centre of decision-making and to avoid negative unintended consequences:
  - 4.1. **All Types of Abuse:** Any introduction of a mandatory reporting duty must apply to all forms of child abuse, not individual categories of abuse, so as not to create a 'hierarchy of abuse'.
  - 4.2. **Children's Rights-based Approach:** The RCPCH recommends that the Government must carry out an assessment of the

introduction of mandatory reporting of child abuse, for example using UNICEF's seven principles of a rights-based approach.

**4.3. Impact Assessment:** In light of evidence that social care systems cannot always respond to the rise in reports when mandatory reporting is introduced, the RCPCH recommends that the Government carries out a full impact assessment in order to better understand how social care systems will adequately respond to child abuse reports.

**4.4. Outcomes for Children:** Should the Government proceed with mandatory reporting, the RCPCH recommends that clear, defined outcomes for children are identified and built into any proposals so that the result of an introduction of mandatory reporting is monitored to ensure that it is resulting in better outcomes for children, rather than simply an increase in reports.

**4.5. Clear Definitions:** The Government must establish and clearly define the practical mechanisms which would exist as a part of a mandatory reporting duty including [\(Figure 2\)](#):

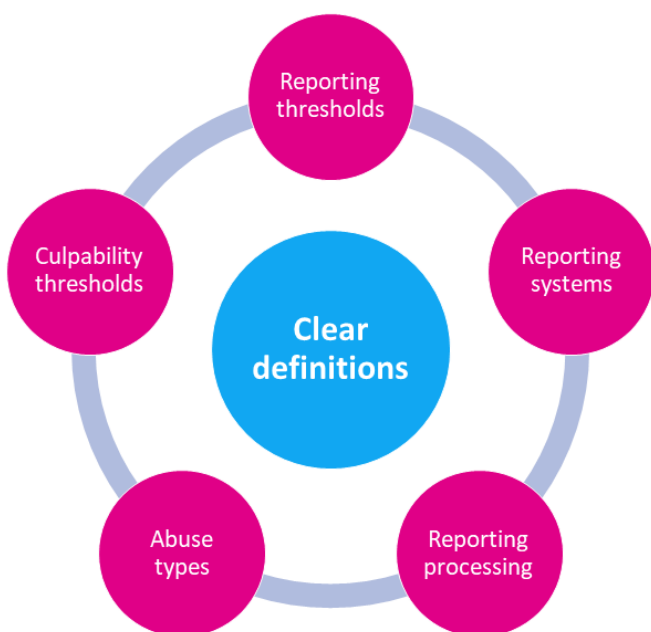
- 4.5.1.** Thresholds for reporting
- 4.5.2.** Reporting systems
- 4.5.3.** Reporting processing
- 4.5.4.** Abuse types
- 4.5.5.** Thresholds for culpability

**5.** These underpinning principles are summarised in [Figure 1](#) and [Figure 2](#).





**Figure 1: Mandatory reporting of child abuse**



**Figure 2: Clear definitions are required**

- 6. Should the above be addressed, the RCPCH will seek to review this position statement outside of a regularly scheduled review.

## 2. Introduction

### 2a. What is already known about mandatory reporting of child abuse

7. Imposing a mandatory reporting duty usually results in an increase of referrals to social care in relation to suspected child abuse.
8. There is evidence that following the introduction of mandatory reporting, social care systems with limited resource, at least in the short term, find it difficult to respond appropriately to the increase in reporting.
9. Academic literature details significant barriers to reporting of child abuse.
10. There is no clear evidence consensus about whether the expansion of mandatory reporting in England and Wales would effectively detect more child abuse.
11. The literature acknowledges that what works for one population cannot necessarily just be introduced into another with an expectation of the same results.

### 2b. What this position statement adds regarding mandatory reporting of child abuse

12. Any introduction of a mandatory reporting duty must apply to **all** forms of child abuse, not isolated categories of abuse, so as not to create a 'hierarchy of abuse'.
13. The Government must carry out an assessment of the introduction of mandatory reporting of child abuse, for example using UNICEF's seven principles of a rights-based approach.
14. It is essential that, whether or not there is any extension of the mandatory reporting duties already in operation, there **must** be measures designed to overcome the barriers to reporting of child abuse.

- 15.** Any introduction of mandatory reporting must be accompanied by a properly funded, robust, independent academic evaluation of the outcome of that introduction for individual children and groups of children.
- 16.** The UK regulators should agree a standard cross-profession professional regulatory requirement regarding the reporting of child abuse occurring within institutions<sup>1</sup>.

### **3. Background**

- 17.** The introduction of mandatory reporting of child abuse (“mandatory reporting”) in England and Wales is a complex and nuanced policy option with a wide range of known and unknown consequences and outcomes. It is paramount that any decision made in this area must be grounded in a full academic evaluation, and long-term monitoring, of the outcomes for children to ensure that any approach taken is in the best interests of children and young people.
- 18.** The RCPCH therefore believes that any such introduction of mandatory reporting must be considered in stages, with measured outcomes at each stage and input from relevant stakeholders throughout.
- 19.** The RCPCH last reviewed its position on mandatory reporting in 2015. This revised 2023 position statement sets out the RCPCH’s findings, following a systematic review of the available literature on mandatory reporting in a range of jurisdictions in order to update RCPCH’s existing position statement.
- 20.** Our previous position opposed mandatory reporting. During the course of the position review, the findings from the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) were published, which included the recommendation that a mandatory reporting duty should be introduced for cases of child sexual abuse.
- 21.** The powerful lived experience testimonies shared as a part of the IICSA demonstrated a clear need for change, and so the RCPCH, with the help of key stakeholders, legal experts and the clinical experience of our members, set out to identify if the literature would support a movement away from the RCPCH’s current position on mandatory reporting. There

are still several unanswered questions in this space, and so our position recommends that any changes made by lawmakers are the result of careful evidence collection and outcome evaluations.

## 4. Adopting a children’s rights-based approach to mandatory reporting: overview

22. Protection from abuse is one of the key rights children are entitled to have upheld ([Figure 3](#)).
23. In any decision regarding implementation a mandatory reporting, the Government must adopt a rights-based approach, fully protecting the rights of individual children and of groups of children. For example, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) includes the right to a standard of living adequate to protect the health and wellbeing of the individual (and their family). Specific rights are also included for children (for example, Article 25), all of whom are entitled to enjoy the same protection.
24. Under Article 19 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), all children have a right to protection from violence, abuse, neglect. Additionally, UNCRC States – including the United Kingdom – that are signatories to the treaty are required by Article 3 to act in the best interests of children.

### Children’s Rights: Recommendations

- **The RCPCH recommends that the Government must carry out an assessment of the introduction of mandatory reporting of child abuse, for example using UNICEF’s seven principles of a rights-based approach.**
- **Any introduction of a mandatory reporting duty must apply to all forms of child abuse, not individual categories of abuse, so as not to create a ‘hierarchy of abuse’.**

*Figure 3: Children’s Rights Recommendations*

## 5. Current Landscape: existing duties to report child abuse

**25.** Currently, there are a number of specific reporting duties on regulated professionals in England and Wales. These include:

**25.1. Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018) [statutory guidance]:**

Applies to professionals in England and states that *'anyone who had concerns about a child's welfare should make a referral to local authority children's social care and should do so immediately if there is a concern that the child is suffering significant harm or is likely to do so.'*

**25.2. The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act (2014):**

Places a duty on certain public bodies in Wales to inform the local authority if they have "reasonable cause to suspect that a child" who has needs for care and support is at risk of abuse, neglect, or other kinds of harm.

**25.3. Section 74 of the Serious Crime Act (2018):**

Places a duty on teachers, health professionals and social workers in England and Wales to notify the police if they identify Female Genital Mutilation in children. Failure to comply could result in a referral to the professional regulator.

**25.4. Regulatory requirements:**

professional regulators also place duties on their registrants to report child abuse and neglect. The sanction for non-compliance is variable but can include being unable to continue to practice in their profession with the concomitant loss of livelihood.

## 6. Evidence: Research and literature review findings

### 6a. Effects of introducing a mandatory reporting duty

**26.** The literature indicated that imposing a mandatory reporting duty usually results in an increase of referrals to social care in relation to suspected child abuse. There is evidence that following the introduction of mandatory reporting, social care systems with limited resource, at least in the short term, find it difficult to respond appropriately to the increase in reporting. This leads to an increase in the number of reports not investigated, leaving some children who are at risk, or who have suffered significant harm, unprotected. The diagram in [Annex A](#) further illustrates the impact different reporting scenarios can have on children, their families and the system as a whole.

### 6b. Barriers to reporting of abuse

**27.** The literature details the barriers to referral which remain widespread even in jurisdictions where there is a mandatory reporting duty. Barriers to reporting of child abuse ([Figure 4](#)) which were cited in the literature include:

- 27.1.** Lack of recognition of abuse
- 27.2.** Lack of knowledge/support in making referrals
- 27.3.** Lack of understanding between professionals and the receivers of the reports around the thresholds for intervention
- 27.4.** Reporter's concerns about the consequences of 'getting it wrong' when making a referral
- 27.5.** Negative experiences/outcomes for children and young people when a professional has made a referral previously
- 27.6.** Concern regarding professional/personal safety if a referral is made
- 27.7.** Concern about negative impact on the whole family when making a referral

**28.** Most of the above barriers would not be improved by the introduction of a mandatory reporting duty alone. Accordingly, the RCPCH believes it is essential that, whether or not there is any extension

of the mandatory reporting duties already in operation, there **must** be measures designed to overcome the above barriers.

Lack of recognition of abuse
Lack of knowledge/support in making referrals
Lack of understanding between professionals and the receivers of the reports around the thresholds for intervention
Reporters concerns about the consequences of 'getting it wrong' when making a referral
Negative experiences/outcomes for children and young people when a professional has made a referral previously
Concern regarding professional/personal safety if a referral is made
Concerns about negative impact on the whole family when making a referral

*Figure 4: Barriers to reporting of child abuse*

## 6c. Unintended consequences of a change in threshold for reporting

**29.** There is little information about any unintended harms that arise from changes in thresholds to referral, secondary to the introduction of mandatory reporting. These could include potential harm from families not feeling comfortable to seek help, and the impact non-substantiated referrals can have on the child and their family.

## 7. Public policy transfer

- 30.** The literature acknowledges that what works for one population (or jurisdiction or country) cannot necessarily just be introduced into another with an expectation of the same results. For example, little is described in the literature on mandatory reporting about the effect of pre-existing duties on professionals, their levels of knowledge, support systems in place for them, or indeed the resources at the disposal of children's social care or the police.
- 31.** Much of the research focuses on the number of referrals made as an isolated (purported) outcome measure. The RCPCH argues this is actually a measure of a process rather than an outcome. Additionally, there is a dearth of research as to what happens following a referral in relation to the outcome for children. Evidence from the IICSA would suggest that even when children are known to the police and social care, they are not necessarily protected from abuse.
- 32.** There is no clear evidence consensus about whether the expansion of mandatory reporting in England and Wales would effectively detect more child abuse. In this situation, we must synthesise the information contained in the literature and apply this pragmatically to what we know about existing child protection systems in England and Wales in order to determine the most effective approach to improve the detection of child abuse.

## 8. Types of abuse

- 33.** We acknowledge the powerful personal testimonies, shared with the IICSA, by people who were abused as children. It was clear that existing safeguards were not effective in protecting children from child sexual abuse in institutions in the past, and this may still be the case today. It is imperative that any changes made to the child protection system improve our ability to detect and respond to **all forms** of child abuse not an isolated category of abuse.
- 34.** From the literature, the testimonies given to the IICSA, and our professional experience, we know that child sexual abuse rarely occurs in isolation from other forms of child abuse. Our position is that any mandatory reporting duty should not differentiate between different



types of child abuse. This is because different types of abuse often co-exist, and because ethically we do not want to create a hierarchy of abuse, where one type is considered more significant than another. **All children should be protected from all forms of abuse.**

## 9. Monitoring the impact of changes to the child protection system

35. We must act to improve our child protection system. However, it is also important that any changes made can work effectively in current systems to better protect children ([Figure 5](#)).
36. There is a high risk that the introduction of a mandatory reporting duty on all professionals, or on all members of the public (as in some jurisdictions) would overwhelm current systems without a considerable increase in resource to increase the overall capacity of the systems investigating such mandated referrals.
37. Additionally, resource is needed to adequately train and support those making referrals to ensure that those referrals are at an appropriate threshold. It is also important to avoid any unintended consequences, including families not feeling comfortable to seek help, and the impact non-substantiated referrals can have on the child and their family.
38. The IICSA's work around institutional abuse has highlighted the pressures on people working within these institutions that prevent appropriate referrals. There appears to be greater motivation for institutional abuse not to be reported due to concerns about reputational damage and colleague relationships.
39. To support the evaluation of the effectiveness of the introduction of any mandatory reporting duty, data must be collected on the outcome of the referrals mandated. Wherever possible, this should include outcome data as well as process data.
40. It is important that any changes made to the child protection system actually improve outcomes for children and avoid unintended consequences. Therefore, any changes made to mandatory reporting in England and Wales must be incremental, measured, and academically evaluated to ensure that this is the case.

- 41.** As more evidence emerges about the effectiveness of any new mandatory reporting duty, consideration can and should be given, as to whether the duty is working effectively and whether any further changes to the duty should be made.

## 10. Interim recommendations

### Clear understanding: Recommendations

- In light of evidence that social care systems cannot always respond to the rise in reports when mandatory reporting is introduced, the RCPCH recommends that the Government carries out a full impact assessment in order to better understand how social care systems will adequately respond to child abuse reports.
- Should the Government proceed with mandatory reporting, the RCPCH recommends that clear, defined outcomes for children are identified and built in to any proposals so that the result of an introduction of mandatory reporting is monitored to ensure that it is resulting in better outcomes for children, rather than simply an increase in reports.
- The Government must establish and clearly define the practical mechanisms which would exist as a part of a mandatory reporting duty, including:
  - Thresholds for reporting
  - Reporting systems and processing
  - Abuse types
  - Thresholds for culpability

### *Figure 5: Clear understanding is required*

- 42.** It is clear that the assessment and any subsequent introduction of mandatory reporting will require a significant evidence collection and transition period, if introduced.

**43.** In the meantime, the RCPCH suggests that the Government takes immediate steps to strengthen existing mechanisms, taking into account information shared as a part of the IICSA, in order to improve protection for children as soon as possible. The RCPCH has set out a number of suggestions for consideration below. Prior to implementation, clear outcome objectives should be set and data collection methods for assessing these established.

## **10a. Aligning the requirements of existing regulators**

**44.** We recognise the vast contribution to the protection and promotion of the rights of children, by practitioners working within the regulated professions<sup>1</sup> in England and Wales. We feel that the existing mechanisms within these regulated professional bodies may be a useful starting point for introducing a unified approach to the reporting of child abuse while gathering outcomes-based data.

## **10b. Standardising-cross professional approaches to the reporting of child abuse**

**45.** We further recognise the clear stance that the different regulators have on the professional obligations placed upon their registrants to ensure the required processes for the raising of child abuse concerns are followed. We consider that it would be further protective of children's rights, and protective of individual registrants, for the UK

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<sup>1</sup> "Regulated profession" is a term which means a profession which is regulated by law in the UK or a part of the UK. "Profession" includes an occupation or trade, or any subdivision and specialism within a profession.

A profession is regulated by law where there is a legal requirement to have certain qualifications or experience (or meet an alternative condition or requirement) in order to undertake certain professional activities or use a protected title.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/professions-regulated-by-law-in-the-uk-and-their-regulators/uk-regulated-professions-and-their-regulators>

regulators to agree a standard cross-profession professional regulatory requirement regarding the reporting of child abuse, of all forms, occurring within institutions.

- 46.** This new requirement would be protective of children as it would ensure a consistent approach across all organisations engaging regulated professionals, where the child or children may receive services. It would also be protective of the individual registrants as it would give them professional regulatory protection when raising concerns within their own organisations, if required.
- 47.** We also support the IICSA's recommendation to make more childcare practitioners subject to regulation. This would enhance their status, education, and training, as well as making them subject to regulation which further protects children.

### **10c. Strengthening the role of the LADO**

- 48.** The role of the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) team should be strengthened, as should the recommendations around thresholds for referral to this team.

### **10d. Strengthening the role of the DBS**

- 49.** The role of the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) should be strengthened so that barring-decisions are able to be made more quickly and so that there is the provision for an interim bar, which is subject to a right of judicial review. This would ensure external scrutiny of any child protection concerns arising for the behaviour of people working within organisations. This should be complimented with more explicit reference to concerns about child abuse within organisations in whistleblowing procedures.

### **10e. Consistent Child Identifier**

- 50.** The RCPCH recommends that a consistent child identifier (CCI) system is implemented, which will facilitate information sharing between agencies when considering the efficacy of changes to child protection systems. Utilising a single, unique number, such as a child's NHS number, will mitigate against differences in how information is stored on different agencies systems, and allow for joined-up plotting of

outcomes for children. More information on the RCPCH's position on this is available <sup>2</sup>.

## 10f. Measured application

- 51.** At present, it remains the case that the evidence base for mandatory reporting does not provide strong enough assurance that the introduction of this duty would improve outcomes for children and reduce the number of children experiencing abuse. Additionally, the literature and research available does not sufficiently explore the unintended consequences which may arise as a result of a duty to report.
- 52.** The IICSA has told us loud and clear that the system must make a change, and the RCPCH firmly agrees. It is imperative that the right changes are made, which have tangible positive outcomes, can operate effectively in the social and political context of England and Wales, and do not cause further significant harm to come to children.
- 53.** The Government must now take steps to better understand the consequences of an introduction of mandatory reporting through a thorough impact assessment, further stakeholder engagement and – crucially – increased research and data collection.
- 54.** The RCPCH has provided a suggestion as to how data could be gathered in England and Wales through making changes to the reporting landscape for regulated practitioners, where a change can be made in a controlled environment which allows for continuous monitoring and effective training to help reporters identify thresholds for reporting.
- 55.** The RCPCH would be happy to work with the Government to identify measurable outcomes for children when considering how to take this work forward. Should subsequently collected evidence show that a mandatory reporting duty improves outcomes for children, further

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.rcpch.ac.uk/resources/nhs-number-unique-identifier-children-position-statement>

consideration can then be given to rolling a mandatory reporting duty out more widely.

**56.**The RCPCH will also commit to reviewing this position regularly, based on available literature.

## 11. Glossary

CCI	Consistent Child Identifier
DBS	Disclosure and Barring Service <sup>3</sup>
IICSA	Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse
LADO	Local Authority Designated Officer <sup>4</sup>
NHS	National Health Service
RCPCH	Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/disclosure-and-barring-service>

<sup>4</sup> See page 109 of:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/942454/Working\\_together\\_to\\_safeguard\\_children\\_inter\\_agency\\_guidance.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/942454/Working_together_to_safeguard_children_inter_agency_guidance.pdf)

## 12. Appendix A – Outcomes of reported abuse

- 57.** It is possible to apply a scientific framework to the concept of Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse and the application of that framework (demonstrated in this appendix by way of a simply contingency table) ([Table 1](#)).
- 58.** In cell A contains those in whom the Mandatory Report correctly identified those suffering from abuse (as determined by the gold standard). In other words, the test is positive, as is the gold standard. These are the true positives (TP).
- 59.** Cell B contains those whose cases are “Mandatory Reported” but no abuse has occurred according to the 'gold standard test'. These are the false positives (FP).
- 60.** Cell C contains those who are suffering from abuse but have not been Mandatory Reported to the child protection authorities. These are false negatives (FN).
- 61.** Cell D contains those who are not being abuses and whose cases are not Mandatory Reported. These are true negatives (TN).
- 62.** The total number of children being abused, in the population being studied, is the number in **Cell A** plus the number in **Cell C** (ie A + C). Those who are not being abused are the total in **Cell B** plus **Cell D** (ie B + D). The total population being studied is the total number in Cell A, plus Cell B, plus Cell C, plus Cell D (ie A + B + C + D).
- 63.** From [Table 1](#) it is possible to calculate, for example, sensitivity and specificity of mandatory reporting of child abuse, as well as positive predictive value and negative predictive value.

**Table 1: Contingency table (Mandatory reporting of abuse)**

	<b>Abuse occurring</b>	<b>No abuse occurring</b>
<b>Mandatory report made in accordance with duty</b>	True positives <b>A</b>	False positives <b>B</b>



<b>Mandatory report <u>not</u> made in accordance with duty</b>	False negatives <b>C</b>	True negatives <b>D</b>
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64. **Table 2** sets out the potential outcomes when we look to design policy for the reporting of abuse. The policy objective for any introduction of mandatory reporting is for scenarios one and two to occur at the same time, meaning that all abuse is properly reported, and that resources can be correctly allocated to investigating reports.

**Table 2: Contingency table (mandatory reporting of abuse, scenarios)**

<b>Scenario</b>	<b>1) Has abuse been reported as per a duty to do so? 2) Is actual abuse occurring in the situation reported?</b>	<b>Potential outcomes for children, families, and professionals</b>
<b>Scenario 1</b>	1) Yes and 2) Yes: Abuse is reported and abuse is being suffered	This is the goal of any mandatory reporting mechanism - to correctly identify abuse to allow intervention which protects children.
<b>Scenario 2</b>	1) No and 2) No: Abuse is not reported and abuse is not occurring	This is a nil result, where no child is being abused and therefore no report is required- meaning the child is safe and there is no perpetrator. This also means that resources are correctly allocated to identifying abuse.
<b>Scenario 3</b>	1) No and 2) Yes: Abuse is not reported but abuse is occurring	This means that abuse is happening and not being correctly reported, resulting in ongoing harm to a child. It is very important that barriers to reporting are understood and addressed in order to minimise this group. It is important that this is avoided through clear guidance in relation to reporting.
<b>Scenario 4</b>	1) Yes and 2) No: Abuse is reported but is not occurring	This is when a report is made because somebody suspects abuse, but no abuse is happening. This can have a negative effect on the professional relationship between children, families and professional services, and

		result in negative consequences for the child, their family or professionals working with them. It is important that this is avoided through clear guidance in relation to reporting.
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