



POLITIET

POLITIETS UTLENDINGSENHET

SAFE, SECURE AND RESPONSIBLE

POLICE GUIDELINES FOR ASYLUM
CASES INVOLVING CHILDREN



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CASES INVOLVING CHILDREN**

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Preface

All police assignments shall be resolved in a safe, secure and responsible manner. Assignments involving children and youths require special considerations. For this reason, we have developed child-specific principles for police work in asylum cases. These principles form the basis for operationalizing the basic concept of the child's best interests. The main objective is for children to not suffer any harm in their contact with the police at any stage of the process. Among other things, this means that our goal is to eliminate harmful stress in situations when coercive measures are used against unaccompanied minors or families with children.

We always try to be as considerate as possible in executing our assignments. Sometimes, coercive measures are deemed necessary, however, and in these situations, our child-specific principles must be actively applied. We must identify situations when safeguarding of children is necessary and optimize our measures whenever possible.

Understanding, predictability and involvement promote safety, and these elements shall be an integrated part of our operational police service. These perspectives should pervade police action in the asylum process to ensure a clear and evidence-based child-specific police practice.

Morten Hojem Ervik
Head of the National Police Immigration Service

1. Mandate and guideline structure

The National Police Immigration Service (NPIS) initiated in 2017 a project aimed at defining police practices that safeguarded children's needs. The project is funded through the Norwegian National Budget.

This project has produced guidelines to ensure that children's rights are safeguarded in NPIS' interactions with unaccompanied minors and families with children.

The project has defined child-specific principles for police action in an effort to reduce harmful stress to children, youths and families. These principles are research-based and take into account existing research on crises and trauma, such as how trauma arises and how to reduce it and how extensive and repeated stress affect children in sensitive developmental stages.

These child-specific principles will guide the NPIS and police districts in their work with minors and families with children by defining safe, secure and responsible actions and assessments.

The child-specific guide consists of two separate sections:

1. The first section includes general principles for police action in asylum cases involving minors, and the theoretical and professional basis for these principles. This general section was developed by NPIS' external consultants, Dr. Åse Langballe and Prof. Jon-Håkon Schultz, in consultation with Christina Kloster and Thale Moen from NPIS. Dr. Langballe is a senior researcher and has a PhD in social science. She is an expert in educational and psychological science. Her research focuses on children who have suffered violence and traumatic stress and communication with children on sensitive topics. She developed the Dialogical Conversation Method (DCM), which is used in police interviews with children and in asylum interviews with unaccompanied minors.

Jon-Håkon Schultz has a PhD. in special needs education, and is a professor of educational psychology with the Department of Education at the University of Tromsø, Norway. He is leading a research group studying implementation of research-based interventions in educational psychology. His research focuses primarily on post-traumatic stress disorder and how traumatic stress is influencing student learning processes. He is also engaged in research on the provision of mental health support to refugees.

2. The second section is process-specific, framing the general child-specific principles in various contexts in NPIS/police asylum related assignments. These processes are:

- Arrival/initial registration
- Identity verification and coordination of deportation
- Arrest and deportation
- Detention
- Return centre
- Legal assessments and decisions

In the original Norwegian version, all of the different processes are described. In the English version, only the process of arrest and deportation is included. This task is considered the most transferable to an international audience, whereas the other parts of the asylum process may vary to a larger extent between different countries.

This second section also includes descriptions of assignments and best practices to provide an overview, promote professional confidence, improve communication and create coherence in all preventive work. This process-specific section is primarily available electronically to facilitate regular updates and revisions.

The process-specific section was developed by representatives from various operational departments in close collaboration with Jon-Håkon Schultz, Åse Langballe and NPIS' Best interest of the child project, headed up by Christina Kloster, Thale Moen and Herborg Pedersen.

2. Definitions

Asylum field/asylum process

In the context of this guide, this refers to any and all NPIS tasks involving minors, with or without assistance from local police. This includes tasks associated with the asylum process, as well as police action in rejection and expulsion cases. For practical purposes, however, this is collectively referred to as the asylum field/asylum process.

Child safeguarding training

In this context, this refers to knowledge concerning children and youths under the age of 18 in terms of:

- their vulnerability to potential harm
- their need for care and security
- the implementation and execution of preventive and emergency measures
- knowledge of children's legal rights
- knowledge of collaborative partners in health and child welfare services

Evidence-based

The four child-specific principles developed by NPIS are evidence-based, which means that they are based on systematic practical experience and international research on preventive measures to reduce and prevent harmful stress.

Harmful stress

In this context, this refers to stress that overwhelms the child to such an extent that common coping strategies prove insufficient. Two types of stress are particularly relevant:

- *Traumatic stress*, which entails that you believe you yourself or someone close to you will die or be severely injured.
- *Persistent severe stress* occurs when you experience a sense of being in danger over a prolonged period of time.

3. NPIS child-specific principles

Why are child-specific principles necessary?

Under international and Norwegian law, children have a number of independent rights by virtue of being children. These rights apply regardless of their legal status as aliens. As the enforcing authority in the field of immigration, the police have a duty to ensure that the rights of children are protected.

The National Police Immigration Service and local police interact with children in many different settings and make decisions that affect children, either directly or indirectly. These settings include registration of asylum applications upon arrival, ID verification, planning/coordination of deportation, detention, arrest and deportation. NPIS has therefore developed this general guide with child-specific principles to clarify the practical approach in this field.

Children are vulnerable

Children are vulnerable because they have not yet developed the cognitive capacity and acquired the life experience necessary to fully comprehend the world around them. Unaccompanied minors and children and youths traveling with their families are particularly vulnerable, because many of them have previously experienced frightening and potentially traumatizing events. In addition, their initial contact with the police in Norway can sometimes in itself appear frightening. If the police fail to take into account this inherent vulnerability in children, the result may be that unfamiliar situations appear more frightening to children than they need to be.

Much of the work performed by NPIS/local police in asylum cases is conducted in a calm and cooperative setting between children, youths, parents and the police. However, the police should constantly be aware of the needs of children and youths, both when interaction is going well; if a situation escalates; as well as when coercive measures, such as arrest, detention or forced return, are necessary. This applies to all tasks throughout the entire process, from arrival to deportation. It also applies in cases where we, in our case processing, make decisions that affect children without ever actually meeting the children.

The best interest of the child, as applied in NPIS assignments

The National Police Immigration Service has defined four child-specific principles *to prevent harm to children and youths as a result of police action*. Police assignments must be performed in such a way that it protects the *best interest of the child* in situations police have a duty to resolve. Child-specific principles must be applied as a preventive measure to avoid unnecessarily

frightening situations and to prevent potentially harmful stress. Taking into account children's needs and perspectives will promote calm collaboration between children, parents and the police, which in turn, may reduce the need for coercive and forceful methods.

In this context, the best interests of the child coincide with the application of the following child-specific principles:

- **Safety**

By remaining calm and friendly in their interaction with children, the police can help children feel safe.

- **Understanding**

The police can help children and parents understand a situation better by explaining what is happening and why, and by providing clear and appropriate information to parents and children.

- **Predictability**

The police can make a situation more predictable by explaining to parents and children what is going to happen and how it is going to happen.

- **Involvement**

The police can involve children, youths and parents by establishing direct communication, and providing them with an opportunity to influence their own situation. This enables parents to reassure and calm their children.



Figure: Child-specific principles as applied in police assignments to prevent harm to minors

4. Theoretical foundation of evidence-based practice

The human body is designed to cope with danger. Whenever there is an immediate threat to our lives we react instinctively to escape the danger and find our way to safety. Our bodies go into survival mode. Our heart rate and breathing increase to provide more oxygen to the body, and more blood is pumped into our muscles in preparation for either defending ourselves or running for cover. Muscle seizure is an example of an automatic response that may manifest in these situations. They are all part of the natural survival responses our bodies have. You could say these are *natural* responses to an *unnatural* event. Once the danger has passed our bodies usually return to normal functions. Sometimes, however, this does not happen as the brain incorrectly continues to register danger, thus maintaining its survival mode. The individual remains in a constant state of alertness, prepared for new dangers. The stress level is chronically high. Maintaining such an alert state at all times requires a lot of energy and is very exhausting for the individual, who often experiences inner chaos and reduced functional ability. School-aged children find it more difficult to learn, pre-school children find it more difficult to play, and adults experience reduced work capacity.

Research indicates that most people, who are exposed to a singular traumatic event where they believe they are going to die or become severely injured, gradually return to their normal level of functioning. Immediately after the event, they have strong reactions, which then gradually subside. This applies to approx. 70–80 percent of the population. For some, however, strong reactions persist over time, and they need professional help managing or overcoming their reactions. See, for example: Alisic et al., (2014); American Psychiatric Association, (2013).

For several generations, researchers have tried to determine why the majority of people exposed to a singular traumatic event recover and do well, despite their trauma. One team of researchers reviewed relevant research and were able to identify five essential principles in the wake of traumatic events (Hobfoll et al., 2007). The presence of these principles contributes to the majority of people recovering without long-term traumatic reactions. These five principles are: 1) restoring calm; 2) restoring a sense of safety; 3) maintaining social relationships and remaining connected to social communities; 4) a feeling of empowerment and feeling reassured that if you ask for help, you will get help; and 5) maintaining hope for the future.

These five principles may seem over-simplified. However, in the wake of a traumatic event where you believed you could die or become severely injured,

your body will have a strong reaction. That is why these five principles are essential for helping the body manage these strong reactions and regulating the body's alarm response.

Three factors in particular play a role in how we handle a crisis after the crisis has occurred. Circumstances related to the *event* itself (e.g. intensity), circumstances related to the *individual* (life experience and coping strategies), and the quality of the *social support and help* received by the individual after the event.

By resuming social relationships after crises and trauma, the five principles laid out above help regulate the reactions – especially for adults. Children and youths are more vulnerable in this process as they lack the life experience required to fully comprehend and manage the situation. See, for example: Norris et al. (2002; 2009).

Both adults and children who have been exposed to multiple traumatic events are more likely to develop long-lasting problems. When an individual has previously been exposed to multiple traumatic events, a new traumatic event will likely trigger stronger reactions than if it were an isolated, singular event. Repeated exposure to trauma heightens the risk of longer-lasting reactions as well as the development of other symptoms, such as anxiety and depression.

When children at sensitive developmental stages repeatedly experience frightening events and their caregivers do not help them regulate or manage the emotions triggered by fear, they experience double stress. This can be very harmful to the child. This type of double stress, termed *developmental trauma*, puts children at higher risk of developing developmental, psychiatric and neuropsychological disorders (ADHD, anxiety, depression and PTSD). When the child's caregivers themselves have been exposed to life-threatening and unsafe situations as a result of war and having to flee their homes, and are having to face the asylum-seeking process, which in itself is unpredictable and stressful, the caregivers' ability to provide the child with adequate care at times may be reduced. This is an example of situations where NPIS' child-specific principles are applied with the aim to support the parents' abilities to provide the child with adequate stimulation and care. In this context, it is important to keep in mind that unaccompanied minors are especially vulnerable.

Consequences of exposure to repeated traumatic events have been well-documented in research. See, for example: Perfect et al. (2016); van der Kolk et al. (2005). A child who has been exposed to four or more traumatic events has a higher risk of developing learning disorders, behavioural disorders and various health problems (Burke et al., 2011; Thompson et al., 2016. See also The Adverse Childhood Event Study).

The children, youths and families the NPIS/local police interact with are vulnerable, because we know that many of them have previously been exposed to traumatic events. See, for example, Trang and Lau (2002), who summarize international research on this subject, and Vervliet et al. (2014); Skårdalsmo & Jensen (2015); and Jacobsen, Meyer & Heir (2014), who provide an overview of refugees and asylum-seekers in Norway. Research-based insights on the impact of stress were used to define child-specific objectives and principles to guide the work of NPIS staff and local police. When the police interact with children and youths in asylum cases, their approach should always be safe, secure and responsible.

Figure 2 presents an overview of situations and processes where the principle of the child's best interests must be operationalized. Text marked in red shows situations and processes for which NPIS are not directly responsible. In the other contexts, NPIS/local police are the responsible agency. The challenge is connecting child-focused initiatives in context, across arenas and agencies.



Figure 2: Situations and processes where the principle of the child's best interests must be defined and operationalized.

Potentially harmful stress

In this context, *harmful stress* refers to stress that overwhelms the child to such an extent that common coping strategies prove insufficient. Two types of stress are particularly relevant: *traumatic stress*, which entails that you believe you yourself or someone close to you will die or be severely injured, and *persistent severe stress*, which occurs when you experience a sense of being in danger over a prolonged period of time.

Reactions to trauma – four main categories

The following four categories describe reactions to traumatic stress as these are described in the American diagnostic manual (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

■ Re-experiencing

Distressing thoughts or images from the event. Distressing dreams and nightmares. Experiencing intense emotions and physiological reactions when reminded of the event.

■ Active avoidance

Actively trying not to think about, have emotions related to or talking about what happened. Attempting to avoid activities, places or people reminiscent of the event.

■ Cognitive changes

Difficulties remembering important aspects about the event. Seeing oneself, others or the world in general in a negative way. Losing interest in activities one used to enjoy. Feeling alienated or having a limited range of emotions. Blaming oneself or others for what happened and experiencing a constant negative emotional state characterized by fear, guilt and/or shame.

■ Arousal

Increased arousal, which may manifest as irritability and anger, careless and destructive behaviour. The individual is excessively alert, easily startled and may have difficulty concentrating. The individual often has trouble sleeping and experiences physiological reactions when reminded of the event.

Those experiencing one or more of these symptoms may struggle to place the traumatic event in the past, because the event is still actively present in the person's everyday life. The symptoms described above are part of the diagnosis referred to as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). In order to be diagnosed with PTSD, a certain number of symptoms from each category must be present over time and overall contribute to a significant reduction in general functioning. This means that a person may be experiencing one or more of these symptoms, even if that person does not meet the criteria for a PTSD diagnosis.

It is important to point out that trauma reactions in themselves are common and perfectly normal reactions to a serious and unnatural event. Only when symptoms persist over time and with great intensity does it become a problem. One major consequence of long-term trauma symptoms is that these symptoms severely interfere with the person's functional ability – making it impossible for them to live normal lives

A potentially traumatic event

The way various individuals experience the same situation may vary considerably. Some may be convinced the situation is life-threatening and think they are going to die, whereas others may find the situation frightening without fearing for their lives. The body's survival mode is activated in the individuals who believe their lives may be in danger. The potential for harm may also vary depending on the individual's previous life experiences and the quality of the support from their community after the event. Taking into account the variety of reaction patterns, the term "potentially traumatic event" is useful.

Those who respond by going into full survival mode will likely have a traumatic response – they become traumatized. How long trauma reactions persist will depend on the degree to which preventive principles are present and whether the individual is able to benefit from them.

In other words, we do not know in advance who will be traumatized by a potentially traumatic event. But we do know that children and youths are vulnerable – they are even more vulnerable if they have previously been traumatized.

In the work carried out by NPIS/the police in the asylum field there are several potentially traumatic events, especially when coercive measures are used. For example:

- Arrest
- Detention
- Deportation

A key characteristic of a traumatic event is that the person has no control over the situation. That is why NPIS' child-specific principles emphasise the need to create a sense of safety, to explain what is happening and to involve children and youths, in order for them to experience a minimum of control of the situation. We must identify situations where minors may feel unsafe and help them feel more safe and in control of the situation. That way, we can help reduce or eliminate harmful stress.

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ARREST AND DEPORTATION

Child-specific principles of NPIS

Understanding – Safety – Predictability – Involvement



Arrest of families or unaccompanied minors to be deported

Arrest and deportation is the part of the asylum process that is associated with the highest risk of inflicting traumatic stress on parents and children. Children are particularly vulnerable in such a situation because they have not yet developed the cognitive capacity and acquired the life experience to comprehend what is happening, and because they are sensitive to the reactions of their parents, on whom they are reliant. Arrest is generally an extremely unsafe situation from a child's perspective. Depending on age, period of stay in Norway and level of integration into the local community with established friendships, school enrolment etc., a child may experience grief and a sense of loss. These factors may determine the potential long-term effects of arrest and deportation on the child. The police must make every effort to reduce harmful stress and trauma in this situation and not make matters even worse. Under the NPIS child-specific principles, the police will seek to perform the arrest and deportation as gently as possible. This also follows from section 106a subsection 3 of the Norwegian Immigration Act. That means doing all we possibly can in the situation to reassure the child and make it feel safe, explain what is happening here and now, to involve the child as much as possible. It also means enabling the parents as much as possible to take care of their children. So the police must seek to maintain a child-sensitive perspective throughout the operation when arresting families with children or unaccompanied minors for deportation, and throughout the deportation.

Functional description

An arrest is made when operational police officers are directed to make it. The amount of notice may vary, and so how much time there is to plan the arrest. In brief, an arrest involves going to residence of the family or the unaccompanied minor, as a main rule no earlier than 6 o'clock in the morning. The police introduce themselves and state their mission, that they have been directed to arrest the person(s) for deportation. The family or unaccompanied minor must pack their belongings and get ready to leave. The police transport the person(s) arrested to the next accommodation, either the Haraldvangen family detention centre / family unit, or directly to the Gardermoen immigration return centre.

In case of escorted return, the family or unaccompanied minor is escorted on the flight and throughout the journey, including any transit, to the final destination. The assignment of the Police Immigration Service is complete once the family or unaccompanied minor has been received and accepted by the authorities of the home country. When unaccompanied minors are returned to their home countries, it is a legal requirement that any forced return must be to a family member, an appointed guardian or other appropriate care arrangement*.

Key aspects to keep in mind

- An awareness of the needs of children and young people, and how these needs can be met in this situation.
- An appreciation of the fact that the family or child is in a crisis and may experience arrest and deportation as traumatic events.
- An appreciation of the fact that parents, in a situation of acute stress, may have difficulty safeguarding their children.
- An appreciation of the fact that the children to be arrested may not know that they are in the country illegally or be mentally prepared for police intervention.
- An appreciation of the fact that children may have previous negative experience of the police, and that the police may frighten them.
- Knowledge of the fact that separating children from their parents may cause serious harm.
- Communication skills with children and young people.
- Knowing how to help parents safeguard their children in the situation, e.g. not scaring or threatening the children.

Potential pitfalls

- Not allowing enough time for planning and preparations.
- Assigning officers without sufficient experience of arresting children, or without child safeguarding training.
- Allowing too little time for the assignment.
- Assigning too few officers.
- Officers being unfamiliar with the asylum case and the personal circumstances of the person(s) to be arrested and deported.
- During execution of the assignment: Officers being relatively unprepared as to whom they will be faced with, and what may happen. Officers being loud and abrupt in their behaviour.
- The police may cause a harmful and potentially traumatic experience for the child(ren).
- The officers making the arrest do not communicate adequately with the officers to escort the family during deportation, and important information about any incidents or other circumstances is lost.
- There are language problems during the arrest, and children are used as translators to communicate significant information.**

Relevant measures

Physical and mental preparations

It is important to include officers *whose special task it is to safeguard the children* and who will attend to their needs specifically in the event of a situation. This involves a responsibility for buying necessary baby food, nappies, etc. prior to making an arrest and deportation, depending on the children's ages. Officers responsible for the children need to be confident in

their roles, and be prepared to have to change nappies and attend to the needs of the children should their parents fail to do so during arrest or deportation.

Officers experienced and confident in handling children may be crucial to the child's experience of a dramatic situation. This may reduce stress levels and minimise the risk of late effects and trauma.

- Familiarise yourself with the person's asylum case and history, in particular health information.
- Collect up-to-date information about the family and the child(ren) from reception centres or other sources.
 - Recent events or incidents
 - Friends and activities – whom might the child want or need to say goodbye to?
- Determine what level of skills and knowledge the senior officer and the other officers should have.
- Determine the number of officers needed for the assignment.
- Determine how much time is needed for the assignment to be conducted in an appropriate manner.
- Determine the appropriate amount of time between arrest and deportation. Liaise with the coordinating caseworker to discuss the best way of proceeding.
- The senior officer must make sure a translator is available over the telephone wherever practical. Children must not be used as translators, that is prohibited by law.** This applies to all communication during



arrest/deportation, but is of particular importance when communicating the reason for the arrest, the role of the police and what is going to happen. Wherever possible, bring an officer who speaks the relevant language. This will cover all situations where use of a translator is impractical, e.g. on the plane. Otherwise, discretion must be used.

- Prepare mentally for what you may be faced with, speak to colleagues and gather information on the culture of and conditions in the country of destination. This enables officers to avoid transferring their personal feelings or perceptions to the children.
- Plan how to build a rapport and communicate with the child(ren). How to say things?
- Plan how to handle any aggressive behaviour in parents or children.

Execution

- Allow time for informing both parents and children why you are there, and what is going to happen next. Officers whose special task it is to safeguard children should be tasked with informing the children in particular, in a way that they can understand. This should be done continuously, from arrest to arrival in the country of destination.
- Use a translator, too much rather than too little. Even if the child's Norwegian appears to be good, it may still not understand everything that is being said.
- Introduce yourself to the child(ren) and spend time building a rapport, be friendly and clear.
- State your role clearly, and focus on what is happening here and now. Example: *“Hello, my name is....and I am a police officer. Do you know why the police are here? (Give the child time to answer). The situation is that you and your family are going to return to your home country.*
- Explain to the child what is going to happen, in as much detail as possible.
- Example: *“What happens next is that you must pack your clothes and belongings, and then we will drive everyone to a different place called Haraldvangen.*
 - If you want me to, I can help you. We are going to drive in the police car, and it takes about an hour. Everyone in your family will come.
 - When we arrive, you will meet someone called....
 - I will make sure everything goes smoothly. Tell me your thoughts (...). Is there anything on your mind or do you have any questions?” Ahead of the deportation, you can talk specifically about the flight and what will happen there. If the child asks about conditions in his/her home country which you cannot answer, be honest and say you haven't been there, but you know it will be fine.
- Talk to the child about everyday, innocuous matters; you demonstrate your interest and help the child relax. Topics may include what the child likes to do, interests such as football, gaming etc., depending on the child's age.

- Clear up any misunderstandings or threats. Ask openly, adapted to the child's age and level of maturity, for instance: "I wonder what you know about the police in Norway?" If necessary, defuse the situation: "The police in Norway look after children, and I will make sure you are safe."

You can ask the child if he or she has ever spoken to or met the police in Norway. Has anybody told the child about the police or threatened the child with the police?

Some children may have been told they will be killed if they are returned to their home country. If this comes up, you can reassure the child that it will not happen: "I know of many children and families who have returned to (...). None of them have been killed, so it's not going to happen to you either."

- Involving the children is important and may boost their sense of control. Maybe the children can help with something simple, if they like? Do they need you to help call or see someone to say goodbye?
- Allowing plenty of time for the assignment is essential. Seek to give the family or unaccompanied minor sufficient time and peace to regroup, have breakfast and pack during the arrest. How far we can stretch in terms of time, must be balanced against security considerations and police operational interests on site. Be flexible by meeting particular needs not associated with security or other risks, things that family members feel they need to do before leaving. Ask if there is anything in particular the child wants to bring – a special toy or a memento? The idea of leaving



forever may be hard to grasp for a child. It may cause unnecessary stress if the favourite teddy bear is left behind at the reception centre.

- Families with children or unaccompanied minors must not be arrested before 6 o'clock in the morning, as a main rule. A decision to arrest issued by a NPIS prosecutor calls for arrest from 6 o'clock, unless otherwise specified.
- Children and young people must not be arrested at school or nursery.

If the situation escalates, parents become aggressive, etc.

- Let the parents know that their behaviour may harm the children.
- Shield the children from the actual situation. Prevent, far as possible, the children from witnessing their parents' aggressive behaviour, and take them to a different room. Note that the children will probably still become aware of the situation! It is inadequate to just distract the children by taking them elsewhere to talk about something else, or pretending nothing is going on. As a police officer you need to explain to the children what is happening. Sit down with the children, nurture them and talk to them at their level. Explain to the children what is happening. Be specific and state the obvious, e.g.: *"Now Dad is upset, so he is angry. Then we have to make sure he does not harm himself or others. It is my job as a police officer to make sure that everybody is safe. Dad will calm down soon."* Invite the children to talk about it; ask the children specifically if they have any questions about what just happened. Then it is appropriate to change the subject, ask if the child wants to draw, etc.
- Children being aggressive or violent: Is there anything that the parents can do to help? If not, try to shield the child. You can for example close the door, be calm and soothing, e.g.: *"I am here, and I will look after you and help you. We have plenty of time (...) I would like to talk to you about what makes you angry or uneasy now, I will listen to you. Tell me what's on your mind."*
- Spend time. If it proves impossible to sooth an older child though calm conversation, you must follow the rules regarding use of force, should it be necessary to e.g. restrain the child.

Closing / post-assignment work

- Say goodbye to the child, if possible in the company of the next person due to accompany the child. You will facilitate the transition to the next stage. Spend time!
- Take great care to communicate information to the persons due to handle the family or unaccompanied minor in the next stage, from the arrest to Haraldvangen and on to the escorting officers. Tell them what you have already spoken to the children about, and how the children and the family

are handling the new situation. This makes for a coherent process, and you promote a sense of peace and safety in the situation of the child.

- **Debrief.** Arresting families with children or unaccompanied minors can be a mental and emotional strain. While you may have planned well ahead, remember that things never go completely to plan. You might want to keep in mind that the assignment may have a greater emotional impact than you had imagined. So a post-assignment debrief is vital in order to bring this to light. The senior officer should initiate a post-assignment debrief with the participating officers. There should be a low threshold for talking about your reactions post assignment.

Police child-specific responsibilities: Duty to inform and avert

During an arrest, there may be an incident or information may emerge that gives cause for concern that a child is being neglected, abused or otherwise the victim of a crime.

Children enjoy a wide range of rights, rights that apply irrespective of immigration status, as long as they are physically in Norway. Police employees are duty-bound to ensure that children's rights are safeguarded while in their custody. Under the Child Welfare Act, public-sector employees have a legal, separate and personal obligation to alert Child Welfare Services if there is reason to believe that a child is being abused, or if the child is otherwise seriously neglected.*** The police must alert the municipal Child Welfare Services or the after hours child welfare emergency service. This obligation overrides confidentiality rules under other laws.

Should a situation arise during the arrest which gives cause for serious doubt about the parents' capacity to care for the child(ren) you must *always* inform the police prosecutor on duty, or via the NPIS's operations centre. Child Welfare Services should be alerted in certain cases; such incidents may impact on the case/deportation.

Employees of the police service must also be acquainted with the responsibility that follows from the duty to avert, see section 196 of the Penal Code. The provision states that any person has a duty to report or avert a criminal offence or its consequences. This duty also applies to employees of the police, in relation to protection of children.

Legal references

*Immigration Act section 90 subsection 8

Forced removal of an unaccompanied minor may only occur to a family member, an appointed guardian or another appropriate care arrangement. The King may issue regulations containing further provisions.

**Public Administration Act section 11 e

Administrative agencies shall not use children to interpret or otherwise communicate information between the administration and persons who lack sufficient language skills to communicate directly with the administration. Exceptions may be made when necessary to avoid loss of life or serious damage to health, or when necessary in other emergency situations. Exceptions may also be made in circumstances when it must be deemed judicious, having regard to the interest of the child and the other circumstances of the case.

***Child Welfare Services Act section 6-4

Any person who performs a service or work for a public administrative body must, notwithstanding the duty of confidentiality, alert Child Welfare Services without undue delay

a) when there is reason to believe that children are or will be abused, suffer serious defects in the day-to-day care or other serious neglect (...)

