



Scottish Child Interview Model for Joint Investigative Interviewing Interviewer Retention Analysis

This paper is a summary of two linked pieces of work undertaken by the National Joint Investigative Interviewing Team. The first piece of work is analysis of interviewer retention data which utilises snapshot data from June 2025. The second piece of work is exit survey findings from a small group of interviewers who had moved on from the role as of November 2024. These two pieces of work build on earlier interviewer retention analysis work undertaken in November 2023.

Date report completed: October 2025

Executive Summary

Interviewer Retention Analysis - Conclusion

Data currently indicates that, while a majority of interviewers reach 36 months in practice, those who do move on are more likely to do so approaching the 24-month milestone.

There is little movement in the small group of interviewers who reach the 4-to-5-years in practice milestone.

The retention rate for police officers is slightly higher than for social workers and the current average time in practice for police interviewers is slightly higher.

Exit Survey - Conclusion

There is key learning that will help support interviewer retention:

1. Ensure recruitment and selection processes are robust and provide clarity on the interviewer role and responsibilities.
2. Ensure team management arrangements are effective, with recognition that forensic interviewing is a specialist task, that this work can have an impact on staff wellbeing and that police and social work are distinct professions.
3. Provide options for interviewers to work as full-time interviewers or to combine interviewing with other responsibilities, while ensuring effective workload management.
4. Build in pathways for career progression, including management roles, that permit retaining interviewing responsibilities.
5. Provide interviewers with appropriate wider contextual information about children interviewed, including outcomes from the child protection investigation and justice outcomes, so that interviewers have a sense of outcomes for the child and how they have contributed to these.
6. Attend to the mental health and wellbeing of interviewers.

Interviewer Retention Analysis

Background

Joint investigative interviewing in Scotland has transformed experiences and outcomes for children participating in these types of interviews since the introduction of the Scottish Child Interview Model in 2020.

Underpinning the new approach to joint investigative interviewing is the National Joint Investigative Interviewing Training Programme and an implementation science informed approach to systemic change. Social workers and police officers now undertake specialised training in forensic interviewing of children, and they work within systems that provide the necessary conditions for them to apply their new learning and skills in practice in a sustainable and scalable way.

This transformational change has demanded a great deal of leadership, resourcing, and system change and one of the key challenges experienced by local authorities and local policing divisions, from whom interviewers are recruited, relates to workforce pressures.

In recognition of those workforce pressures, the driver behind undertaking an analysis of interviewer retention data was to identify any learning that would be of value in supporting high retention rates amongst this staff group.

Readers should remember that retention data, by its very nature, is dynamic and the findings in this paper relate to a specific point in time.

Scope

Those who undertake joint investigative interviewing using the Scottish Child Interview Model, do so on successful completion of module 3 of the National Joint Investigative Interviewing Training Programme. Therefore, length of time in practice directly relates to time since training.

For this interviewer retention analysis work, data from the first 17 training cohorts has been used as those who completed module 3 of that training programme have a minimum of 6 months practice experience.

Every social worker and police officer employed in a role that includes responsibility for undertaking joint investigative interviews has been included in this data analysis. Some interviewers work fulltime, some part time and some are utilised on an ad hoc basis. All interviewers are included in this data regardless of regularity or nature of deployment in practice.

Many local interview teams include a mixture of interviewers with differing deployment arrangements.

Also included in this data are interviewers who may be temporarily unavailable for deployment due to, for example, maternity leave. Such interviewers remain employed in a role that

includes responsibility for joint investigative interviewing and therefore these staff are included in this data analysis.

Methodology

Using snapshot data from June 2025, we looked at how many interviewers in total remain in practice since completing training; what proportion reach certain practice milestones; and what was the length of time in practice for those who left the role.

Findings

Findings below are based on a total of 188 interviewers who went into practice between February 2020 and December 2024.

Where comparison figures are given, this relates to analysis undertaken in November 2023 of 120 interviewers who went into practice between February 2020 and May 2023.

- The overall retention rate as calculated in June 2025 is 76%. This compares to 84% in 2023.
- When broken down per profession, the rate is 74% for social work and 77% for police.
- In that time, 46 interviewers left the role: 25 social workers and 21 police officers.
- The average length of time in practice for the 25 social workers who moved out of role is 21 months.
- The average length of time in practice for police officers who moved out of role is 24 months.
- 95% of all interviewers reach at least 12 months in practice. This compares to 94% in 2023.
- 82% of all interviewers reach at least 24 months in practice. This compares to 80% in 2023.
- 61% of all interviewers reach at least 36 months in practice. This compares to 65% in 2023.
- At 48 months in practice, 46% of interviewers remained in their roles.
- At 60 months in practice (5 years), 42% of interviewers remained in their roles.

Exit Survey

Background

The National Joint Investigative Interviewing Team undertook some interviewer retention analysis in November 2023, and, following that, it was agreed that an exit survey would be introduced to try and capture any learning from those who moved on from the role which could contribute to supporting high retention rates for interviewers.

It was recognised that the role of joint investigative interviewer within the context of the Scottish Child Interview Model was substantively different to this role under the previous system. As such, the focus of the exit survey was the role of a joint investigative interviewer.

Scope

The exit survey work was undertaken in November 2024, at which time 39 interviewers had moved on from the role. 2 of those were returning to interviewer roles so they were not included in scope.

For 9 interviewers, their contact details were unknown as they had either retired, left the country, or moved to an entirely different organisation. For another 3 interviewers, it was not appropriate to include them in this survey due to personal circumstances. These 12 were ruled out of scope.

Therefore, a total of 25 exit surveys were issued. 11 to police and 14 to social work.

13 responses were received – a response rate of 52%. 8 responses were from police officers (62%) and 5 from social workers (38%)

Methodology

The survey questions are as follows:

1. What was the main reason you decided to leave the role of joint investigative interviewer?
2. What type of role did you move on to do?
3. Is there anything that could have supported you to remain in the role of joint investigative interviewer longer?
4. What aspects of your learning from the National Joint Investigative Interviewing Training Programme have you transferred to other roles or aspects of your work?
5. If you could change one thing about the role, what would it be?
6. Would you consider working as a joint investigative interviewer again in the future?
7. Any other comments or feedback?

Interviewers had the option of completing a word document survey or providing information in the narrative of an email or meeting on MS Teams with a member of the National Joint Investigative Interviewing Team. All three options were utilised.

Findings

Primary reason given for leaving the role:

- Promotion or other job opportunity – 5 responses
- Dissatisfaction with team management – 4 responses
- Dissatisfaction with system/process – 2 responses
- Other aspects of the job – 2 responses

8 of the 13 said they would consider returning to the role of joint investigative interviewer.

Of the 5 who said no, 1 related it to the expectations of the role. The others said they had enjoyed the role but had moved on in terms of their career.

All but one respondent gave examples of how they used their learning in practise. Some made additional comments about how valuable they had found the training programme to be.

Some referred to their mental health being impacted – primarily this was linked to wider system stresses but one linked it to the interviewer role directly – support and supervision was mentioned by a few respondents.