



Information for Employees and Volunteers regarding the Management of Allegations of Abuse against Adults who work with Children

Becoming the subject of an allegation is inevitably difficult and distressing for everyone involved and is likely to cause a great deal of anxiety and concern. We recognise that the impact on you, your family and the child concerned can be far reaching. We are committed to providing fair treatment and to achieving just outcomes for all concerned.

This guide is intended to help you to be as well informed as possible should you be faced with an allegation. It provides an explanation of the process that will be followed and offers information about appropriate support and guidance.

Some of the information contained in this leaflet only applies to employees, not volunteers: where this is the case, this is clearly indicated. Please note that the term 'manager' could apply to your line manager, your Headteacher or another relevant manager within the school or service in which you work/volunteer, and the expressions 'child' and 'children' are used to refer to both children and young people.

What is an 'allegation'? An 'allegation' refers to any information or concern which suggests an adult who works with children has:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed, or may have harmed, a child;
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against, or related to, a child: or
- Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children.

An allegation can arise in connection with your work, your own children or other children living outside the family, and can relate to a current or historical concern.

An allegation can be made in a number of ways:

- Directly by the child in person;
- Indirectly, for example by friend/s of the child;
- Complaint from a parent/carer to a Headteacher/Manager, Children's Social Care or the Police;
- Report from a colleague or another agency;
- Anonymously.

What happens when an allegation is made? All allegations are taken seriously and acted upon. The management of allegations sits within an effective cycle of good practice which exists both to protect children and those who work with them. When

an allegation is made, a senior manager/Headteacher will refer to the Local Authority Designated Officer* (LADO), who has overall responsibility for the management of allegations. Together they will consider the nature, content and context of the allegation and agree the course of action to be taken.

*Local Authorities are required to designate officers to be involved in the management and oversight of individual cases – this person is known as the ‘Local Authority Designated Officer’ (LADO). The LADO provides advice and guidance, liaises with the Police, Social Care Teams, regulatory bodies such as Ofsted and other organisations as needed and ensures a consistent, fair and thorough process for both child and adult.

Any allegation that meets the threshold for ‘harm’ or ‘risk of harm’ will be reported to police and social care for investigation. Investigations may have three related, but independent, strands:

- Enquiries and assessment by children’s social care regarding whether a child is in need of protection or in need of services;
- A police investigation into a possible criminal offence;
- Consideration by the employer of whether disciplinary action is necessary.

These three strands need to be thoroughly assessed and a definite conclusion reached on each of them. To ensure this happens, a ‘Strategy Discussion’ will take place to plan any enquiries, allocate tasks and set timescales. The meeting’s primary focus is on safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the child, but it’s also about ensuring a fair process for you, as the adult. It will consider not only the children directly involved in the allegation but also any other children who could have suffered, or are at risk of suffering, harm. This could include your own children.

These meetings are held under the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) Procedures: they are not part of any disciplinary procedure. There may be circumstances in which the meeting could take place before you have been made aware of the allegation. Those invited to the Strategy Meeting include representatives from the Police and the relevant Social Care Teams, a named Senior Officer/Manager from your place of work and a Human Resources Advisor. In certain circumstances, representatives from Health and Education professionals involved with the child also are invited.

All relevant information will be shared and decisions made about what actions are to be taken next. For employees, if the initial evaluation establishes that a Police or Social Care investigation is not required, the matter may still need to be dealt with under disciplinary procedures. One reason for this is that the burden of proof in criminal cases is “beyond reasonable doubt” whereas the threshold of “the balance of probabilities” applies to disciplinary proceedings.

Please be assured that any subsequent investigations will be conducted as speedily as possible, but of course this has to be balanced against the need for a thorough and fair process. Your views will be represented and shared through any applicable investigation processes by the Police, Social Care Team and your employer.

Cases subject to Police Investigation: If a criminal investigation is required, the Police will set target dates for reviewing progress and for consulting with the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) about whether to proceed with the investigation, charge you with an offence or to close the case. If the Police and/or CPS decide either not to charge you or to administer a Caution, or if a Court acquits you, the Police will pass all information that would be relevant to a disciplinary case (such as statements) to either the LADO or your manager. If you are convicted of an offence, the Police should inform your employer straight away.

Disciplinary Investigation: If a Disciplinary Investigation is to take place, the investigation will take place in accordance with the Disciplinary Policy/Procedure (which you will be provided with a copy of). In some cases you will have been told not to attend work whilst the investigation is in progress. This is called 'suspension' from duties. Suspension will not take place without careful thought and consideration being given to other suitable alternatives, such as a transfer of duties or additional supervision. Suspension acts as a protection to both the child/children involved and yourself. It is a 'neutral' act, meaning that its use does not mean you are considered blameworthy of the allegation.

Will anybody else be notified? Every effort will be made to maintain confidentiality and guard against publicity while an allegation is being investigated and considered. However, alongside the Police and Social Care, there will be a need for a small number of people to be informed that an allegation has been made and the likely course of action:

- The child/young person concerned, their parents/carers and any party making an allegation;
- You – at the appropriate time;
- Your manager;
- In schools, the Chair of Governors;
- The Local Authority Designated Officer;
- Potentially the relevant regulatory body e.g. Ofsted and/or
- Your professional body e.g. the General Medical Council (GMC)
- The Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) (formerly the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA) and the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB)

Where there is concern the matter has or may become common knowledge or subject to speculation, it may become necessary to issue a brief statement for parents, children and members of the public.

Support for Employees: You will be:

- a) advised to contact your Trade Union representative and/or professional association;
- b) offered the services of a Staff Counselling Service, if available.

Employees and **volunteers** will be kept informed of the progress of the case by their line manager, or suitable person designated by them.

Will I be informed of the outcome of the Strategy Meeting? Depending on the scope and scale of the investigation/s, more than one Strategy Discussion may be

needed before an outcome can be arrived at. At the final Strategy Discussion, the outcome of Police and Social Care enquiries will be discussed with your employer and consideration given as to whether you pose a risk to children and your suitability to work with children in your current position.

Recommendations will be made to your employer about the level of risk and/or any training issues that may have been identified. Where an allegation has been made but the threshold for harm is not met, your manager may deal with the issue as an internal matter. Where an allegation has been substantiated this may not always result in dismissal, but additional training and monitoring may be necessary.

In the event that you are dismissed from your post because of a safeguarding concern, your employer has a statutory duty to refer you to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) for consideration as to whether barring you from working with children is appropriate.

What if I resign during the disciplinary investigation? It is important that every effort is made to reach and record a conclusion in all cases of allegations bearing on the safety or welfare of children, and so a resignation would not prevent an allegation from being followed up and considered through the strategy process. Any reference given will make reference to an ongoing investigation. In addition, your employer has a statutory duty to refer you to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) for consideration to be given to barring you from working with children if you resign before a disciplinary process is completed and your manager considers that you may have been dismissed at the outcome of the process.

What about my return to work? Where it is decided that you can return to work, your employer will consider how best to facilitate this. This may include a phased return.

Will the details of the allegation stay on my personal employment file? Details of allegations that are found to have been false or malicious should not be retained on personnel records. A clear and comprehensive summary of all other allegations made, their chronology and decisions reached will be kept on file at least until you reach normal retirement age, or for 10 years if that is longer. This applies even if you leave. The purpose of this record is to:

- provide clarification in cases where a future DBS (CRB) Check reveals information from the Police that an allegation was made but did not result in a prosecution or conviction;
- enable an accurate response to be given to any future request for a reference;
- prevent unnecessary re-investigation if allegations resurface after a period of time.

Will the details of an allegation appear on my DBS Disclosure Certificate? Yes if the allegation results in a criminal charge, caution or conviction. However, it is also possible there may be reference to an allegation that did not result in a criminal charge or conviction on a future Enhanced DBS Disclosure Certificate. Such information would be disclosed at the discretion of a senior individual within the Police Force, if it is considered relevant.

False allegations: Allegations deemed to be false or malicious should be referred to the LADO, and consideration will be given to a referral to Social Care for assessment. This is to rule out the possibility that the child is being abused elsewhere and displacing blame. Experience shows that false/malicious allegations are not the norm: there is often misunderstood /misinterpreted behaviour of the adult, or the child is aggrieved in some way at treatment received. In the event that an allegation is shown to have been invented, the Headteacher/Senior Manager should consider whether disciplinary action against the individual who made it is appropriate. The Police may also be asked to consider further action, taking into account the circumstances.

Where can I get more information?

- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2013
<http://www.workingtogetheronline.co.uk/>
- Chapter 8.2 - Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) Procedures - Allegations Against People who Work with Children
<http://pansussexscb.proceduresonline.com>
- Dealing with allegations against teachers and other staff in schools
<http://www.education.gov.uk/>
- Your Manager/Human Resources Advisor
- The Disclosure and Barring Service from 2012
<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/disclosure-and-barring-service>

Key Legislation

- Children Act 1989
- Education Act 2002
- Children Act 2004 – Every Child Matters, Change for Children
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
- The Employment Act 2008
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2013
- The Protection of Freedoms Act 2012