

Allegations of abuse against people who work with children

Staff members who have concerns about the behaviour of a colleague towards a child are undoubtedly placed in a very difficult position. They may worry they have got the situation wrong. All staff must remember that the welfare of the children is paramount. This policy allows staff to raise concerns or an allegation knowing it is in confidence. All concerns should be reported to the designated lead practitioner which is Rebecca Owen or Deputy Ann Myatt. If the complaint should be such that it is about the deputy, staff should report to the lead practitioner Rebecca Owen, however if the concern is about the lead or anybody acting as the lead staff this should be reported to the designated trustee Kelly Cooke.

We ensure staff, volunteers and anyone working in the setting knows how to raise concerns that they may have about the conduct or behaviour of other people including staff/colleagues. We also differentiate between allegations, and concerns about the quality of care or practice and complaints and have a separate process for responding to complaints.

Specifically, the question should be asked as to whether the allegation or concern possibly meets any one of the following thresholds:

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

If any of these situations apply, then report to the designated lead as soon as possible. The designated lead will then consult with the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) within 24 hours of the allegation being made. In Staffordshire they are co-located with the First Response Team and situated with the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).

The designated lead will:

- Offer reassurance that the information will only be shared on a need to know basis
- Make a written record of the information and sign and date the written record
- NOT notify the person concerned at this stage
- Refer to the LADO within 24 hours unless an emergency then First Response/Police immediately
- Make referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service if removed from regulated activity

LADO procedure is to:

- Provide advice/ guidance to employers and facilitate an initial discussion
- Liaise with police and other agencies
- Monitor the progress of cases to ensure they are dealt with as quickly as possible and it is done so fairly and thoroughly
- Seek to resolve any inter- agency issues
- Collect and store all confidentiality information in relation to the allegation

Initial Discussion

An initial discussion will be held with the duty LADO and the designated lead practitioner to consider the nature, content and context of the allegation being made, and to agree an appropriate course of action. If the thresholds are not met, then the complaints procedure will be followed within the setting. If the thresholds are met then there are three possible scenarios:

1. A police investigation of a possible criminal offence
2. Enquiries and assessment by children's social care about whether a child or young person is in need of protection or in need of services
3. Consideration by an employer of disciplinary action in respect of the individual

These scenarios are not mutually exclusive and may not appear singularly but in combination.

LADO will advise us about:

- Next steps
- Whether/ how to inform the accused person
- How to inform the Child's parents
- Suspension
- How to monitor the outcome

We also report any such alleged incident to Ofsted (unless advised by the LADO that this is unnecessary due to the incident not meeting the threshold), as well as what measure we have taken. We are aware that this is an offence not to do this.

We would cooperate entirely with any investigation carried out by children's social care in conjunction with the police. Where the management team and children's social care agree it is appropriate in the circumstances, the member of staff or volunteer will be suspended for the duration of the investigation. This is not an indication of admission that the alleged incident has taken place, but is to protect the staff, as well as children and families, throughout the process. They would always be kept updated on the investigation. Where it is appropriate and practical and agreed with LADO, we will seek to offer an alternative to suspension for the duration of the investigation, if an alternative is available that will safeguard children and not place the affected staff or volunteer at risk.

Disciplinary Action

Where a member of staff or volunteer has been dismissed due to engaging in activities that caused concern for the safeguarding of children, we will notify the Disclosure and Barring Service of relevant information, so that individuals who pose a risk to children can be identified and barred from working with children.

Training

The designated lead will receive training as recommended by the Local Safeguarding Children Board, every two years and update their knowledge annually. We will ensure all staff are aware of the procedures for reporting and recording concerns they may have, and all receive updates on safeguarding via emails, online training and discussions at staff meetings.

Important numbers

<p><u>First Response Team and Duty LADO (located within the MASH) - Staffordshire</u></p> <p>Freephone: 0800 1313 126 (Monday to Thursday, 8.30am to 5.00pm and Friday 8.30am to 4.30pm) Email: firsttr@staffordshire.gov.uk Staffordshire Police via the MASH 0845 6042 886 (out of hours) or 101 The Emergency Duty Service 01785 354030</p> <p><u>Contact Details for the LADO - Stoke-on-Trent</u> The Safeguarding Referral Team (SRT) 01782 235100 (Monday to Thursday, 8.30am to 5.00pm and Friday 8.30am to 4.30pm) In an emergency outside office hours telephone 01782 234234</p>
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If an allegation has been made against a staff member then the procedure: Allegations/concerns against staff and volunteers, disciplinary/suitability process (see Flow chart) will follow actions.

Further guidance can be found using the following links:

Staffordshire: Section 4A Allegations of Abuse against a Person who Works with Children

Stoke: DO1 Managing allegations against staff and volunteers working with children and young people (LADO)

Any subject of an allegation, or partner agency, who wishes to make a formal complaint about the outcome of an allegation, or the manner in which Staffordshire LADO has managed the process, should contact the customer service and complaints team who will decide on the most appropriate way of investigating the concern:

