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**Managing Allegations of Abuse**

The commitment to safeguarding children is an ongoing process. All staff and volunteers should feel responsible for helping to make a safer culture and empowered to speak out if they have concerns.

To help develop a safe environment for speaking out, you can:

Have clear, easily available procedures for people to follow if they want to report a concern and make sure all staff understand them.

Guarantee confidentiality.

Commit to taking action about concerns that are raised.

Model acceptable standards of behaviour.

Any allegation that an employee or volunteer has behaved in a way that has harmed, or may have harmed, a child **must be taken seriously and dealt with sensitively and promptly.**

The child’s views, needs and wishes must be considered carefully and they should be given appropriate support.

**If you think a child is in immediate danger**
**Don't delay – call the police on 999,**
**or call us on 0808 800 5000, straight away**.

**Roles and responsibilities**

Every organisation should appoint at least one person who is responsible for dealing with allegations or suspicions of abuse. Your organisation should make sure that all staff and volunteers know who this person is and how to contact them.

Staff and volunteers should also know who to contact if they feel unable to report an incident within their organisation. They can report an incident to the police or local social services.

**Procedures for managing allegations**

All organisations that provide services for or work with children should have **clear procedures for dealing with allegations of abuse**, complaints or concerns about a member of staff or volunteer. These should comply with [national guidance](https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/safeguarding-child-protection/child-protection-system-in-the-uk/).

**Responding to an allegation of abuse**

Depending on the situation, managing an allegation of abuse may involve:

a police investigation of a possible criminal offence

enquiries and assessment by children's social care about whether a child is in need of protection or in need of services

consideration by the employer of disciplinary action against the individual.

If someone resigns from their post or refuses to cooperate with the investigation process, this must not prevent an allegation being followed up.

“Compromise agreements” (where a person agrees to resign, and the employer agrees not to pursue disciplinary action) **must not be used** in cases of alleged abuse.

**Reporting an allegation of abuse**

If an allegation is made that a staff member or volunteer 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

behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they are unsuitable to work with children.

You must report this **immediately** to the relevant agencies (for example the [NSPCC helpline](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/services-and-resources/nspcc-helpline/) on **0808 800 5000**, your local children's social care services or the police).

If your organisation removes a member of staff or volunteer from working with children because they pose a risk of harm (or if you would have but the person has resigned or left), you have a **legal duty** to inform the relevant disclosure and barring agency. **Failure to do this is a criminal offence**.

In England, Wales and Northern Ireland refer to the DBS.

**Confidentiality and support**

You should make every effort to maintain the confidentiality of all parties while an allegation is being investigated.

Consider how best to support the children involved, their parents or carers, and individuals who have had an allegation made against them. This includes:

telling parents or carers and the employee or volunteer concerned about the allegation as soon as possible

telling them how you are going to manage the allegation

keeping everyone informed about the progress and outcomes of the case.

**Record keeping**

It’s important to keep a clear and comprehensive summary of:

all allegations that have been made

details of how allegations have been followed up and investigated

decisions made about the allegation and actions taken.

**Learning lessons**

If an allegation is substantiated it is vital to think about lessons that can be learnt. This should include:

considering whether there are factors that may have contributed to or failed to prevent abuse occurring

a review of recruitment policies

a review of the measures in place to ensure ongoing vigilance,making changes to organisational policies and procedures as necessary.

In some cases a [case review](https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/child-protection-system/) may be appropriate. This means an independent reviewer will speak to all the agencies involved and consider the case. They will consider whether there are lessons that should be shared more widely to improve safeguarding practice.

**Reporting concerns**

If a child is suffering or at risk of suffering significant harm, you can share information with appropriate agencies or professionals without the child’s or their parent’s consent

If a child is in immediate danger, call the police on 999.

If a child is not in immediate danger:

Follow your organisation’s safeguarding policies and procedures as soon as possible. These should provide clear guidelines on the steps you need to take if a child discloses abuse. They will state who in your organisation has responsibility for safeguarding or child protection and who you should report your concerns to.

[> Find out more about the role of the nominated child protection lead](https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/research-resources/templates/role-description-child-protection-lead/)

Contact your local child protection services. Their contact details can be found on the website for the local authority the child lives in.

Contact the police. They will assess the situation and take the appropriate action to protect the child.

Contact the NSPCC Helpline on 0808 800 5000 or by emailing help@nspcc.org.uk. Our trained professionals will talk through your concerns with you, give you expert advice and take action to protect the child as appropriate. This may include making a referral to the local authority.

If you have made a verbal referral to local children's services you should follow this up with a written referral as soon as possible, ideally within 48 hours.

If your organisation doesn’t have a clear safeguarding procedure or you’re not comfortable with how your organisation has responded to your report, contact the Whistleblowing Advice Line to discuss your concerns.

[> Find out about the Whistleblowing Advice Line on the NSPCC website](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/what-you-can-do/report-abuse/dedicated-helplines/whistleblowing-advice-line/)

**Mandatory reporting**

Female genital mutilation (FGM)

It is illegal to carry out FGM in the UK. It is also a criminal offence for UK nationals or permanent UK residents to perform FGM overseas or take their child abroad to have FGM carried out.

In England and Wales, regulated health and social care professionals and teachers must make a report to the police, if, in the course of their duties:

they are informed by a child under the age of 18 that they have undergone an act of FGM

they observe physical signs that an act of FGM may have been carried out on a child under the age of 18.

**Vetting and barring checks**

The Disclosure and Barring Service provides detailed guidance for employers in **England** and **Wales** on the process of applying for DBS checks.

Information about how to apply to foreign countries for criminal records checks is available from the Home Office (2017).

**Disqualification**

Across the UK, it is an offence for an individual who has been barred to apply for a regulated position. It is also an offence for an employer to knowingly employ someone in a regulated position if they are barred from doing so. Employers must refer any information about employees or volunteers who (may) have harmed children while working for them to the relevant barring service for their nation.

In **England** and **Wales**, the legislation for this is the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006.

The Department for Education (DfE) has provided statutory guidance about disqualification under the Childcare Act 2006 for schools and local authorities(Department for Education, 2018a).

In **Northern Ireland**, the legislation for this is the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (NI) Order 2007.
In **Scotland**, the legislation for this is the Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Act 2007.

**Disqualification by association**

In **England**, Regulation 9 of the Childcare (Disqualification) and Childcare (Early Years Provision Free of Charge) (Extended Entitlement) (Amendment) Regulations 2018 states that if somebody lives in the same household as another person who has been disqualified from working with children, they can be disqualified from working with children in domestic premises. The Department for Education’s statutory guidance for schools and local authorities on disqualification under the Childcare Act 2006 covers disqualification by association (Department for Education, 2018a).

In **Wales**, if somebody lives in the same household as another person who has been disqualified from working with children, they can be disqualified from working with children regardless of the setting under Regulation 8 of The Child Minding and Day Care (Disqualification) (Wales) Regulations 2010.

**Managing allegations**

There are some differences in the way allegations should be handled in each nation of the UK.

In **England**, the national guidance is Working together to safeguard children: a guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. (Department for Education, 2018c).

Local safeguarding partners will also have child protection procedures.

This policy was last reviewed on: 05/04/23

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