

Experience shows that children can be subjected to abuse by those who are supposed to be caring for them. It is essential that children do not feel inhibited from reporting abuse against them by foster carers or others. Children have a right to be treated properly and any incident where a child or adult feels that a trusted adult has crossed the boundary of acceptable behaviour should be reported.

All individuals who work with children must ensure that the environment they work or live in encourages children to make truthful reports of unacceptable behaviour.

This leaflet provides a brief guide to the process that should be followed, but if faced with an allegation against a staff member or volunteer, you are strongly advised to consult the LADO at the earliest opportunity.

Local Authority's Designated Officers are contactable via:

Tel: 01472 326118

North East Lincolnshire Local Safeguarding Board

Safeguarding Children: Dealing With Allegations of Child Abuse against Teachers & Other Staff

Introduction

All allegations should be reported to the Head teacher immediately unless that person is the subject of the allegation in which case it should be reported to the Chair of Governors.

Heads/Chairs, you will have a key role to play should an allegation be made, from any source, that a teacher, staff member or volunteer has;

- 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; or,
- behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates s/he would pose a risk of harm to children.

Initial Action

The person receiving the initial allegation should not promise total confidentiality to the child/ren who make allegations. The child/ren should be advised that the matter will be reported on to staff who can help. A written record of information should be made.

Heads/Chairs should obtain and countersign the record made by the person who first received the allegation, and then consult the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO). The subject of the allegation should not be informed unless this has been agreed with the LADO as the Police or People & Communities Directorate may need to be consulted.

Details of the case should not be discussed with other governors or staff, as this might prejudice future criminal or disciplinary process. You should only share information on a need to know basis.

Out of Hours

If the Head/Chair is told about a serious allegation outside normal working hours, and the LADO is not available, they should contact the Out of Hours Team and inform the LADO on the next working day.

Gathering Information

Subject to the advice from the LADO, Heads/Chairs should obtain information about the date and location of the alleged incident and the names of any witnesses. Heads/Chairs can clarify any points they are unsure about, but should not interview the child, any possible witnesses (including staff members/volunteers) or ask them to write an account of what happened. The “Allegations Against Staff Reporting Form” has been designed to assist Heads/Chairs to collect and record information regarding allegations. It is the job of the Police and People & Communities Directorate to investigate an allegation of child abuse. **Schools should not conduct their own investigations.** The school’s Designated Person or deputy should be able to assist with details of the child and whether s/he made previous allegations.

Strategy Meeting/Allegations Management Meeting

Unless the allegation is demonstrably false, a multi-agency strategy meeting/discussion should take place, either by phone or meeting, in order to share relevant information and determine whether an investigation needs to be undertaken, and if so by whom. Heads/Chairs are likely to be invited to take part, and the LADO can advise about what to expect and what information Heads/Chairs may be able to provide.

Suspension

Suspension should be considered in cases where:

- there is cause to suspect a child is at risk of significant harm, and/or
- a police investigation is warranted, and/or
- the allegation is so serious, it might be grounds for dismissal

Suspension ct’d

Suspension is normally delegated to the Head teacher or a group of governors (not the full governing body) where the allegation is made against the Head teacher, so as to avoid the risk of prejudicing any future proceedings. The Head teacher or Chair can decide whether or not to suspend if delay would be seriously detrimental to the school, pupil, parents or staff.

Suspension should not, however, be an automatic response and alternatives may be appropriate.

Timescales

Every effort should be made to resolve matters at the earliest opportunity and cases will be reviewed at least monthly.

Confidentiality

Every effort should be made to maintain confidentiality and guard against unwanted publicity.

Support

Staff who are the subject of an allegation will benefit from support and this should be identified at the earliest opportunity. This could be through Occupational Health or Employee Welfare Arrangements etc.

Record Keeping

It is important that employers keep a summary of any allegations made, details of how the allegation was followed up and resolved, and details of any action taken and decisions reached, on a person’s confidential personnel file. The summary should be made available to the staff member.

Further Guidance

More detailed guidance can be found on the North East Lincolnshire Local Safeguarding Children Board website.

www.nelsafeguardingchildrenboard.co.uk