

Experience shows that children can be abused and harmed 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 professionals, staff or volunteers. Children have a right to be treated properly and any incident where a child or adult feels that a person in a position of trust has crossed the boundary of acceptable behaviour, should be reported.

All individuals who work with children must ensure that the environment in which they work or live supports and encourages children and adults to make honest reports of unacceptable behaviour.

Contact Details

Local Authority Complaints Officer

feedback@nelincs.gov.uk

01472 326427/01472326426

Good Practice in dealing with allegations

Being under investigation is always stressful, but agencies can help by:

- Minimising Delay
- Providing you with written information
- Being open and honest
- Ensuring access to independent support

If you are unhappy about the way you have been treated by your employer, you should refer to your Employer's Grievance Policy. If you are unhappy about the way the investigation was conducted, you should contact the Local Authority's Complaints Officer on the number above or at feedback@nelincs.gov.uk

North East Lincolnshire Local Safeguarding Board

Safeguarding Children: Dealing With Allegations Information to Support Staff and Volunteers when allegations are made

Dealing with an Allegation

This leaflet aims to provide information to you about what happens if an allegation of harm is made against you. It also provides information about other situations where there is a concern about the boundaries of acceptable behaviour with a child.

Becoming the subject of an allegation will always be stressful for you and your family. The challenge for everyone concerned is to ensure that children are affectively safeguarded and that their welfare is promoted, whilst at the same time treating you fairly and honestly.

What Happens When an Allegation is made?

If an allegation is made about you, your employer will refer the matter to the Local Authority's Designated Officer whose role it is to offer advice in these circumstances.

The Local Authority's Designated Officer will discuss the concerns with your employer and if the allegations are of a serious nature, they will make a referral to the Police and/or Children's Services who will undertake further enquiries.

North East Lincolnshire's Safeguarding Children Partnership (SCP) provides detailed guidance to all agencies about the procedures to be followed. You can access these on the SaferNEL Website: <http://www.safernel.co.uk/>

What form does the enquiry take?

There are 3 related, but separate sets of enquiries which need to take place. Each differs in terms of focus and can have different outcomes. The 3 types of enquiries are:

- Child Protection Enquiries – relating to the safety and welfare of any children who are or who may have been involved;
- A Police investigation into a possible offence;
- Disciplinary Procedures; relating to allegations that may amount to misconduct or gross misconduct on the part of the staff.

Your employer will aim to inform you about the existence of the allegation as soon as they receive it. However, they may not be able to do this until after they have consulted with other agencies. In most circumstances, you could expect to be informed of the substance of the allegation within 3 days of your employer receiving it.

What happens if everyone thinks the allegation is serious?

Children's Services and the Police will hold a strategy meeting to agree what type of enquiries will need to be made (police investigation or Children's Social Care enquiry or joint enquiry) and what is required to safeguard any children involved. Your employer will usually be involved and sometimes other agencies involved with the child.

How will I know what has been decided?

Your employer will keep you informed of what type of enquiries will be carried out and the expected timescales. You can expect to be treated fairly, and also be informed verbally and in writing about the nature of the concerns.

You will also be informed of all decisions and outcomes as soon as possible. It is usual practice for the professionals involved to review the progress of any investigation regularly and conclude it as quickly as possible

Where can I get independent support from?

Independent support can be a great help and benefit to you. You may be able to contact some of the following:

- Union or Professional Association
- Occupational Health or Employee Welfare Service
- General Practitioner

Please discuss opportunities for independent support with your employer.

Will I be suspended from work while enquiries are ongoing?

Employers should not suspend persons accused of an allegation automatically, or without careful thought. Your employer will need to consider: if there is a cause to suspect that a child is at risk of significant harm; if the allegation warrants a police investigation; or if the concerns are so serious that there might be grounds for dismissal. If you are suspended your pay may be affected depending on your employer's policy.

Will details of the investigation be kept on my work records or shared with anyone else?

It is important that employers keep a summary of any allegations made. This will include details of how the allegation was followed up and resolved and any actions taken with decisions reached. These will be kept on a person's You do however have a right to access a copy of information about you that is kept on file and will be made available to you should you request it.

The purpose of the record is to enable accurate information to be provided in response to any future requests for references. It also provides classification in cases where a future Criminal Record Check reveals Police records that an allegation was made but did not result in a prosecution or conviction. Where the allegations were unfounded, this record protects you from the same allegations being repeated in the future.

The Safeguarding Children Partnership will keep a record of all allegations against persons working with children for monitoring purposes. They will hold personal information, the nature of the allegation and the outcome. This information will be stored securely in line with the Data Protection Act requirements.