The purpose of a LADO Position of Trust (POT) meeting is to share relevant information relevant to the allegation that has been made and it will decide the strategy for managing the allegation. This should be held within 2-5 working days of the allegation being made.

The LADO will exercise their professional judgement in their decision making, having considered the threshold of harm, as to whether a POT meeting will be convened.

The harm threshold is when it has been alleged that a person who works with children 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 they may pose a risk of harm to children.

The National LADO Principles 2018 gives further examples to be consider when looking at the thresholds:

Any action or inaction, by commission or omission that has, may have, or has potential, if repeated, to cause any form of damage, injury, pain, hurt, discomfort, loss of dignity or suffering to any child. This may be of a physical, sexual or psychological/emotional nature or by negligence or other non-physical acts e.g. via social media and includes:

• harming or placing a child at risk of harm by the person’s own behaviour(s)

• failure to take action to prevent harm by another person

• failure to recognise or accept risk posed by another person e.g. by denial or minimisation

• inciting harm by another person

• failure to follow safeguarding guidance, policies and procedures, including safer working practice guidance

• failure to recognise or meet a child’s welfare or care needs

• circumstances where, on a particular occasion, harm has not been caused to a child, but, if repeated, may do so, either to that child or another child, any behaviour that may suggest a future risk of harm e.g. viewing child abuse images; behaviour that could constitute grooming; violence; bullying or frightening children.

Meetings should not be used to further investigate concerns about inappropriate behaviour or conduct where there are not clear indications of harm to a child/ren.

POT meetings will be chaired by the LADO. It will be attended by the police, social worker (if one) and the employer. The employer is advised to bring a Human Resources advisor. In situations where the allegation is against a health professional, the Designated or Named Nurse for safeguarding should be invited.

Professionals involved in this process should maintain confidentiality. Information sharing should be restricted to those who need to know, in order to protect children, to facilitate enquiries, to manage related disciplinary process, or to determine whether an individual is suitable to work with children.

The meeting should:

* Decide whether there should be a s47 of the Children Act 1989 and or police investigation and whether single or joint agency
* Address the scope of the investigation including other children at possible risk
* Consider whether any parallel disciplinary process can take place and agree protocols for sharing information
* Consider the current allegation in the context of any previous allegations or concerns
* Where appropriate, take account of any entitlement by staff to use reasonable force to control or restrain children
* Consider whether a complex abuse investigation is applicable
* Plan enquiries if needed, allocate tasks and set timescales
* Decide what information can be shared with whom and when

The meeting should also:

* Ensure that the child/ren involved and or affected are safeguarded, including taking emergency action where necessary
* Consider what support should be provided to all children who may be affected
* Consider what support should be provided to the member of staff and others who may be affected and how they will be kept up to date with the progress of the investigation
* Ensure that investigations are sufficiently independent
* Make recommendations where appropriate regarding suspension, or alternatives to suspension
* Identify a lead contact manager within each agency
* Agree protocols for reviewing investigations and monitoring progress by the LADO, having regard to the target timescales
* Consider issues for the attention of senior management (e.g. media interest, resource implications)
* Consider reports for consideration for barring
* Consider risk assessments to inform the employer’s safeguarding arrangements
* Agree dates for future meetings/discussions

It is vital to agree how the member of staff concerned and how the parents of the child/ren are informed of the concerns and the planned action. Ensure it is agreed what information can be shared at each stage and who is responsible for informing them.

**Subsequent meetings:**

A final meeting should be held to ensure that all tasks have been completed, including any referrals to the DBS if appropriate, and, where appropriate, agree an action plan for future practice based on lessons learnt.

It may be appropriate to hold an interim POT meeting to review current status of actions and next steps. Police and internal investigations are timely and need to be reviewed regularly. The member of staff and child/ren also need to be updated regularly and welfare support afford to them throughout. It may be appropriate to meet in the interim to check on the progress of these and to support various parties in executing their allocated actions.

**External safeguarding matters – allegations against staff in their personal lives**

If an allegation arises about a member of staff, outside of their work with children, and this may present a risk of harm/risk of children for whom the member of staff is responsible through their employment/volunteering, a POT meeting should be convened to decide whether the concern justifies:

* Approaching the member of staff’s employer for further information, in order to assess the level of risk of harm: and or
* Inviting the employer to a further meeting about dealing with the possible risk of harm

If the member of staff lives in a different authority area to that which covers their workplace, liaison should take place between the relevant agencies in both areas and a joint meeting convened.

Where the allegation of abuse had been made against someone closely associated with a member of staff, the POT meeting should consider:

* The capacity and willingness of the member of staff to adequately protect the child/ren concerned
* Whether measures need to be put in place to ensure their protection and
* Whether the role of the member of staff is compromised

**Outcomes of Allegation investigations**

Substantiated – there is sufficient identifiable information to prove the allegation

False – there is sufficient evidence to disprove the allegation

Malicious – there is clear evidence to prove there has been a deliberate act to deceive and the allegation has been entirely false

Unfounded – there is no evidence or proper basis which supports the allegation being made. It might indicate that the person making the allegation misinterpreted the incident or was mistaken about what they saw. Alternatively, they may not have been aware of all the circumstances.

Unsubstantiated - An unsubstantiated allegation is not the same as a false allegation. It means that there is insufficient evidence to prove or disprove the allegation. The term, therefore, does not imply guilt or innocence.