

## **Guidance on the Management of Allegations Against Staff of a Child Protection Nature**

Abuse can be perpetrated by adults working in a position of trust, either in an employed or voluntary capacity, in a variety of settings or within an organisation that has responsibility for, or provides services or activities, for children.

In cases where abuse by a member of staff or a volunteer is suspected, the organisation should comply with Regional Child Protection Policy and Procedure to ensure that suspicions of abuse are properly reported and investigated and that all necessary actions can be taken by the agency that employs the member of staff or uses the services of a volunteer.

Organisations must have robust processes in place to determine if allegations meet the threshold of potential harm where they need to be reported to:

- PSNI
- Social Care Trust Gateway Service
- HR Department if required
- Professional Regulatory Body

HSCT social work staff must undertake an assessment of potential risks the person subject to the allegations may present in their home / extended family where children may be present. They should also consider how to support any child/ young person who has made the allegation.

Information Sharing by HSCT must take cognisance of DoH Information Sharing 2021. ([Guidance on Information Sharing for Child Protection Purposes | Department of Health](#))

Organisations must consider whether action is necessary to ensure the person does not have unsupervised access to children /young people or vulnerable adults during the course of the investigation. Any actions taken should be determined following consideration of all available information, including an assessment of risk.

It may be appropriate for the staff member to be placed on precautionary suspension either on the grounds of the possibility of the alleged abuse recurring, or concern that their presence might interfere with the investigation.

Alternatives to precautionary suspension should be considered before any final decision is made, this can include, the staff member being moved to an area of the organisation which precludes contact with children/young people or vulnerable adults and ensures non-interference with the investigation.

It should be noted that there may be both an internal investigation into whether abuse has occurred and if so how the abuse has occurred, and also a criminal investigation by PSNI. The PSNI must be consulted to ensure that nothing is said or done internally which would hinder or undermine a criminal investigation.

It will be for the organisation to consider if disciplinary action is appropriate in line with their own disciplinary procedures.

The initiation of disciplinary proceedings should not rely on a successful prosecution by the PSNI. The fact that the individual who is subject to the allegation has not been prosecuted or has been found not guilty in court proceedings does not mean that disciplinary proceedings are not necessary or feasible.

Organisations have a responsibility to identify any learning points which could prevent similar events in the future.

A referral must be made to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) in accordance with the [Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups \(Northern Ireland\) Order 2007](#). The [DBS](#)

[website](#) provides further information on checks, referrals and barred lists. If an organisation is aware that a member of staff it has suspended also works with children/young people or vulnerable adults for another organisation, either as an employee or volunteer, it should give due consideration to sharing relevant information to ensure that children/young people and /or vulnerable adults are protected in another setting and the other organisation is afforded the opportunity to take any action necessary.

Organisations who employ staff who are required to maintain a registration with a professional body, should consider if that professional body needs to be alerted to possible misconduct allegations.

A record should be kept of all discussions, actions and rationale for said actions.