



Allegations against staff

Information for families when an allegation is made against a member of staff or volunteer



Introduction

Any allegation of abuse is likely to cause a great deal of anxiety and upset to all concerned: the child or young person reporting the abuse, their parents, carers or family members, as well as the person against whom the allegation is made.

This leaflet is intended to guide you through the process of an investigation against a member of staff or volunteer.

In Knowsley a Local Designated Officer (LADO) is in place to manage allegations against staff and volunteers. The role is to co-ordinate the parts played by Police, Knowsley's children's social care and the employer of the accused adult. This is to ensure a thorough investigation is carried out, in a fair manner, for all concerned.

The investigation is governed by government guidance, which can be read in "Working Together to Safeguard Children" March 2015: www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2

General information about Safeguarding in Knowsley can be found in Knowsley's Local Safeguarding Children Board Website: www.knowsleyscb.org.uk/

An allegation against a member of staff or volunteer is different to a **complaint**, which might be made against the way a school or another organisation had dealt with something you were not happy about. Complaints are usually dealt with by the school or organisation.

An allegation is different to a complaint

Allegations

Allegations are about any actions of an adult that have or could have put a child at risk of harm or where the actions of an adult suggest they may be unsuitable to work with children. Government guidance says there are 3 main types of concern where an adult working or volunteering 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
- behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates s/he may pose a risk of harm to children

The accused person should be told about the allegation as soon as possible, but this may be delayed if police or children's services need to plan what information can be given to them whilst an investigation takes place.

Professionals always take what a child says seriously and never make assumptions about what is or is not true. However, if it is clear from the outset that the allegation is obviously false, you will be informed that it is without foundation and that no further action will be taken.

Professionals never make assumptions



What happens next?

If there is reason to suspect your child may have suffered harm, or criminal offence might have been committed, a meeting will be held, involving the Police, the LADO, the employer, and other agencies such as Health and Education as appropriate.

You will not be asked to attend as this is a meeting where confidential information will be taken about the accused person.

The aim of the meeting will be to share information and to determine whether one or more of the following types of investigation need to be held:

- Children's services enquiries, under child protection procedures.
- A Police investigation relating to possible criminal offences.
- An investigation by the employer under disciplinary or suitability procedures.

The meeting will take account of the fact that staff, in certain circumstances, are entitled within the law to use reasonable force to control or restrain children.

The meeting will also discuss whether the accused person should be given different duties during the course of the investigation, whether they should be closely supervised or suspended from their work altogether.

Although everyone involved in investigating or managing an allegation is required to respect the confidentiality of the situation, sometimes information can become known to other people. This may be because the accused person has been arrested or suspended and people will be tempted to speculate and talk about the person. In these cases it can be necessary for the employer or the Council to issue a brief statement for the public, or for example, to staff and parents at a school. You will be advised about this in advance if this is going to be necessary.

In order to help limit unnecessary gossip or speculation it is strongly advised that families, and those directly affected, do not discuss the case outside of their immediate family prior to the formal conclusion.

You will not be asked to attend

Police investigations

If the Police decide to investigate an alleged criminal offence, the member of staff or volunteer may be arrested, or formally invited to assist with the investigation.

The Police may ask for your permission for your child to be spoken to or interviewed in a child friendly manner by specifically trained officers. This can be a worrying time for families and details about where parents and young people can get independent advice and support are given at the end of this leaflet.

Decisions about charging a person with a criminal offence rest with the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS).

If the offence is admitted by the accused, the CPS may advise a Caution (a formal warning) which remain on the person's criminal record.

If the CPS advises that the person is charged, they will either be released on bail to appear in court at a later date or kept in custody until the first court hearing.

If a case does go to court then this can take a long time: sometimes a year or more if it involves other allegations from the past or where there could be more than one victim. It is normal for families and children to feel upset and angry during this period and you may want to seek extra support and information in addition to the help you give one another within your family.

The LADO will ensure everyone assists the police so the investigation is carried out without unnecessary delay.





Contact the LADO
during office hours
0151 443 3928

Cases where the police do not investigate

Where the Police decide to take no further action it is then necessary to decide whether the person may have broken the rules laid down by their employer or whether they are unsuitable to work with children or present a risk of harm to children.

These cases are usually investigated by the employer using their internal procedures and are sometimes assisted by a social worker from Children's Social Care in Knowsley. Your child may have already been asked to write a short account of what happened to them, for example at school, or a social worker may come to talk to your child with your permission.

At the end of the investigation you will be told whether the allegation has been substantiated or not and what sanction has been made.

The LADO will ensure that the employer's investigation is well supported and carried out thoroughly without necessary delays.

Support for children and young people

MASH (Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub)

provides a 'first point of contact' for Early Help and Children's Social Care enabling members of the public and professionals to raise concerns about the safety and welfare of Children.

0151 443 2600 (9.00 am to 5.00 pm Monday to Friday)

Counselling Service for Young People www.kooth.com

Childline www.childline.org.uk

is a free confidential helpline for children and young people in the UK offering information and support when it is needed. Children can call **0800 1111** to talk about any problems.

BACP www.bacp.co.uk

if you would like to speak to someone in confidence, you can visit The British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy to find a qualified counsellor in your local area.



Knowsley Council

Knowsley Safeguarding Children Board

Knowsley Safeguarding Children Board (KSCB) is an independent statutory body responsible for ensuring that individuals and organisations work effectively together to safeguard children in Knowsley.