
HOPE2FAMILIES SAFEGUARDING POLICY

Managing allegations made against a child

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Table of contents:

<u>Handling allegations:</u>	3
<u>Types of allegations:</u>	4
<u>Identifying concerns:</u>	4
<u>Responding to concerns:</u>	4
<u>Talking to a young person who tells you they have behaved abusively:</u>	5
<u>Talking to a young person about allegations against them:</u>	5
<u>Responding to incidents:</u>	6
<u>Keeping records:</u>	7
<u>Deciding if a concern is a child protection issue:</u>	7
<u>When an allegation is a child protection concern:</u>	8
<u>Multi-agency working:</u>	9
<u>Taking action to keep all children and young people safe:</u>	9

Sanctions:	9
Emotional support:	9
Risk assessment:	10
Telling parents and carers about an allegation made against their child:	11
Support for parents and carers:	11
Form for recording incidents concerning young person/ leaders:	13
Reporting concerns:	14
Contact details:	16
Find out more:	17

Handling allegations:

Every organisation that works with children must have procedures about how to respond to allegations of abuse made against a child and concerns that a child or young person may pose a risk to others.

The information on this page will help you to:

- Ensure children who have been impacted by the abuse are given appropriate support
- Provide the child or young person who is alleged to have displayed abusive behaviour with the appropriate help
- Manage any risks to children's safety and take appropriate steps to keep all children safe
- Make sure your organisation's response to any allegations is proportionate, fair and consistent

Types of allegations:

There are different ways that a child or young person may be abusive towards others, and they might not realise they are doing so:

- bullying or cyberbullying
- emotional abuse
- online abuse
- physical abuse
- sexting
- sexual abuse.

When a child abuses another child, it is sometimes called 'peer-on-peer abuse'. Sometimes children might also display abusive behaviour towards adults.

Identifying concerns:

There are a range of ways concerns might be raised.

- A young person or adult might make a direct allegation of abuse by a child or young person
- A young person or adult might tell you they're uncomfortable with a child or young person's behaviour. They may not realise the behaviour is abusive

- One of our leaders members of staff or volunteers might observe behaviour that gives cause for concern and make a report following your organisation's safeguarding procedures
- Our organisation may be informed that a young person is the subject of an investigation
- A young person might tell you they have harmed someone else or are at risk of doing so

Responding to concerns:

When responding to an allegation of abuse made against a young man, it's important to consider the needs of everyone involved.

> Find out more about how to respond if a child tells you they've been abused via the NSPCC website

Talking to a young person who tells you they have behaved abusively:

Sometimes a young person may tell you directly that they have behaved abusively towards someone else.

You should talk to them calmly and remember that they need support.

- Reassure the young person that they've done the right thing by telling you about it
- Listen carefully to the child and let them tell their whole story. Don't try to investigate or quiz the child, but make sure you understand what they're saying.
- Use non-judgmental language.
- Tell them that you now have to do what you can to keep them and the other children involved safe.
- Never promise to keep what a child tells you a secret. Explain that you will need to speak to other people who can help.
- Reassure the child that they can get help to change their behaviour and move forward with their life
- You may want to suggest the child contacts Childline for support.

Talking to a young person about allegations against them:

If allegations have been made against a child you should speak to your nominated child protection lead, who can advise you on the best way to proceed. If you talk to the child about the allegations before taking advice, it may make the situation worse.

For more advice, contact the NSPCC helpline on 0808 800 5000 or by emailing help@nspcc.org.uk.

Responding to incidents:

Sometimes you might see a child behaving inappropriately and decide to talk to them about this immediately, in order to manage the behaviour. Remember that they may not realise their behaviour is unacceptable. Talk to them calmly and explain why their behaviour is unsuitable and what they can do to improve it.

It's helpful to have a code of conduct which everyone in your organisation agrees to, and which you can refer to when managing behaviour.

> Find out more about behaviour codes

> Find out how to respond if a child or young person is displaying sexualised behaviour

Keeping records:

It's important to keep accurate and detailed notes on any concerns you have about a young person's behaviour. As an organisation we should share this record with the person responsible for the supervision or pastoral care of the young person and your nominated child protection lead.

Include:

- The child's details (name, age)
- The date and time of the incident
- What was happening before the incident took place
- What the child said or did that gave you cause for concern (write down their exact words if possible)
- Whether the behaviour appeared spontaneous or premeditated.

> See the NSPCC website on introductory training courses for more detailed information about recording concerns

Deciding if a concern is a child protection issue:

If a child or young person displays inappropriate or harmful behaviour, you should inform your nominated child protection lead.

> Find out more about recognising and responding to abuse via the NSPCC website

Your organisation's nominated child protection lead should decide what action to take, in consultation with:

- the person who is responsible for the supervision or pastoral care of the children involved
- the senior manager, governor and/or trustee responsible for safeguarding
- any other agencies you know are working with the child
- the local child protection services as necessary.

When an allegation is a child protection concern:

An allegation becomes a child protection concern when:

- The behaviour involves sexual assault or physical assault
- The child who has experienced the abusive behaviour has suffered significant harm
- The behaviour forms part of a pattern of concerning behaviour by the child or young person who is being abusive
- The child carrying out the abuse is displaying sexualised behaviour
- You are concerned that the child carrying out the abuse may be doing so because they have experienced abuse themselves

It is also a child protection concern when there's a significant difference of power between the child who is displaying abusive behaviour and the person being abused, for example when:

- There's an age difference of more than two years
- There's a significant difference in terms of size or level of ability
- The child displaying abusive behaviour holds a position of power (such as being a helper, volunteer or informal leader)
- The child being abused is significantly more vulnerable than the other child or young person

If a young person in your organisation has been involved in sexting (sharing nude images), there are extra factors to consider.

When you're not sure:

If you aren't sure whether you need to have a child protection response, you can contact the NSPCC helpline on 0808 800 5000 or by emailing help@nspcc.org.uk. Our trained professionals will talk through your concerns with you, give you expert advice and take action to protect the child as appropriate. This may include making a referral to the local authority.

You should also discuss the matter with your local authority child protection services.

Multi-agency working:

If statutory agencies are investigating and assessing the situation we should stay in contact with them and share all relevant information with multi-agency partners.

> Find out about the best practice for multi-agency working

Taking action to keep all children and young people safe:

Depending on the nature of the allegation or concern, you may need to take action to protect and support children who have experienced peer-on-peer abuse.

Sanctions:

Your organisation's behaviour code should set out what sanctions will apply to anybody who displays inappropriate behaviour. These should be fair and proportionate to the behaviour being displayed.

You should follow these sanctions for any child who does not behave appropriately.

> Find out more about behaviour codes

Emotional support:

If peer-on-peer abuse has taken place in your organisation, it can have an emotional impact on everyone.

Make sure children, young people and adults have access to the emotional support they need and know who they can talk to if they are worried about anything.

Childline provides confidential help and advice for children and young people. Calls to 0800 1111 are free and children can also contact Childline online. You can also download or order Childline posters and wallet cards.

Risk assessment:

Conduct a risk assessment and develop a risk management plan to make sure you are doing everything you can to keep all your children and young people safe.

Things to consider include:

- Any relevant information from other agencies, such as care plans or multi-agency assessments
- Making sure children who experienced the abuse don't have to come into contact with the child who is alleged to have carried out the abuse
- Separating the child who is alleged to have carried out the abuse from other children if there is a risk of further abuse
- Whether the children who experienced the abuse are at risk of bullying or victimisation from others and what prevention measures are needed
- Whether the child who is alleged to have carried out the abuse is at risk of any retaliation and what action can be taken to keep them safe.

Telling parents and carers about an allegation made against their child:

A child's parents or carers should be told what has happened, as long as it doesn't increase the risk to the child.

Ask the child how they would like their parents or carers to be told. You could suggest:

- talking to parents or carers first without the child there, then summarising everything with the child present
- helping the child tell their parents or carers in their own words, with you present for support.

It's important for parents or carers and children to talk about what's happened and begin to come to terms with it as a family.

When talking to parents or carers, remember that the news their child has behaved abusively may be a shock. Reassure them that support is available to help their child change their behaviour and move forward.

Support for parents and carers:

You should also make sure that the parents and carers are offered appropriate support. This might include:

- Therapeutic support to help them come to terms with what's happened
- Family therapy to help the whole family move forward
- Help to reinforce messages about positive behaviour and support their child to change their behaviour

> Read about communicating with parents and carers if there's been an allegation of abuse against their child via the NSPCC website

Form for recording incidents concerning young person/ leaders:

The Young person/ leaders details:

Name

Age

Date

Time

What was happening before the incident took place?



What the child said or did that gave you cause for concern (write down their exact words if possible)



Whether the behaviour appeared spontaneous or premeditated?



Reporting concerns:

If we think a young person is in immediate danger, we will contact the police on **999**. If we're worried about a child but they are not in immediate danger, we should share our concerns.

- **Follow our organisational child protection procedures.** Organisations that work with children and families must have safeguarding policies and procedures in place.
- **Report to the police as appropriate** (for example, if an allegation of physical or sexual assault or a sexual offence is made). This should happen alongside making a referral to children's social care, following local authority guidelines.
- **Contact the NSPCC helpline** on 0808 800 5000 or by emailing help@nspcc.org.uk. These trained professionals will talk through the concerns with us and will give expert advice.
- **Contact the Report Abuse in Education helpline** if we work in a school setting on 0800 136 663 or by emailing help@nspcc.org.uk.
- **Contact our local child protection services.** Their contact details can be found on the website for the local authority the child lives in.

Contact details:

Nominated child protection lead:

Marc Taylor

07514993163

wildfireministrys@gmail.com

Deputy child protection lead:

Heather Taylor

07856201383

wildfireministrys@gmail.com

NSPCC Helpline

0808 800 5000

We are committed to reviewing our policy and good practice annually:

This policy was last reviewed on:

..... 24th May 2022(date)

Signed: *Marc Taylor*

[this is signed by the most senior person with responsibility for safeguarding in our organisation, our safeguarding lead on our board of trustees].

Find out more: