06 Safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults' procedures

06.2 Whistleblowing, and allegations of serious harm or abuse against staff and volunteers

Concerns may come from a parent/carer, child, colleague, or the public. Allegations or Whistleblowing must be referred to the designated safeguarding lead without delay - even if the person making the allegation later withdraws it.

The designated safeguarding lead should be informed of all concerns and make the final decision on how to respond. Where appropriate this can be done in consultation with the Manager.

Reporting concerns about the conduct of a colleague, student or volunteer contributes towards a safeguarding culture of openness and trust. It ensures that adults consistently model the setting's values and helps keep children safe. It protects adults from potential false allegations or misunderstandings.

If it is not clear that a concern meets the local authority threshold, the designated safeguarding lead should contact the LADO for clarification.

In most instances, concerns about staff conduct can be addressed through supervision, training, or disciplinary processes where an internal investigation may take place.

Whistleblowing

Whistleblowing is when an employee of an organisation passes on information that they reasonably believe shows wrongdoing or a cover up by that organisation Identifying concerns about harm, or abuse.

Whistleblowing is important tool to keep children safe, the staff, and the setting. All concerns will be listened to and the reporter protected.

Anyone can be Whistleblowing, visitors, employees, member of the public, outside agencies and parents. Whistleblowing must be in the public interest and not for personal gain.

Examples of Whistleblowing include Fraud, not following EYFS requirements, all adults not being 'suitable' to have contact with the children, risk of the environment and building, a misscarraiage of justice, the health and safety of all users of the setting.

You are protected by law and will be treated fairly by Castor and Ailsworth Preschool.

An allegation against a member of staff, volunteer or agency staff constitutes harm or abuse if they:

- behaved in a way that has harmed, or may have harmed a child
- possibly committed a criminal offence against, or related to, a child
- behaved towards a child in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children
- behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children

Informing

- All staff report allegations to the designated safeguarding lead.
- The DSL alerts the designated officer and Designated Person. Together they should form a view about what immediate actions are taken to ensure the safety of the children and staff in the setting, and what is acceptable in terms of fact-finding.
- Report to OFSTED
- It is essential that no investigation occurs until and unless the LADO has expressly given consent for this to occur, however, the person responding to the allegation does need to understand what is being alleged.
- The designated safeguarding lead or Officer must take steps to ensure the immediate safety of children, parents, and staff on that day within the setting.
- The LADO is contacted as soon as possible and within one working day. If the LADO is on leave or cannot be contacted the LADO team manager is contacted and/or advice sought from the point of entry safeguarding team/mash/point of contact, according to local arrangements.
- A child protection referral is made if required. The LADO, line managers and local safeguarding children's services can advise on whether a child protection referral is required.
- The designated safeguarding lead asks for clarification from the LADO on the following areas:

- what actions the designated safeguarding lead must take next and when and how the parents/carers of the child are informed of the allegation
- whether or not the LADO thinks a criminal offence may have occurred and whether the police should be informed and if so, who will inform them
- whether the LADO is happy for the provider to pursue an internal investigation without input from the LADO, or how the LADO wants to proceed

- whether the LADO thinks the person concerned should be suspended, and whether they have any other suggestions about the actions the designated person has taken to ensure the safety of the children and staff attending the setting

- The designated safeguarding lead or Officer records details of discussions and liaison with the LADO including dates, type of contact, advice given, actions agreed and updates on the child's case file.

- Parents/carers are not normally informed until discussion with the LADO has taken place, however in some circumstances the designated safeguarding lead or Officer may need to advise parents/carers of an incident involving their child straight away, for example if the child has been injured and requires medical treatment.

- Staff do not investigate the matter unless the LADO has specifically advised them to investigate internally. Guidance should also be sought from the LADO regarding whether suspension should be considered. The person dealing with the allegation must take steps to ensure that the immediate safety of children, parents/carers and staff is assured. It may be that in the short-term measures other than suspension, such as requiring a staff member to be office based for a day, or ensuring they do not work unsupervised, can be employed until contact is made with the LADO and advice given.

- The designated safeguarding lead ensures staff fill in 06.1b Safeguarding incident reporting form.

- If after discussion with the designated safeguarding lead or Officer, the LADO decides that the allegation is not obviously false, and there is cause to suspect that the child/ren is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm, then the LADO will normally refer the allegation to children's social care.

- Notification to Ofsted is required for any allegations made against a member of staff, therefore the designated safeguarding lead or Officer will inform Ofsted as soon as possible, but no later than 14 days after the event has occurred. The designated safeguarding lead will liaise with the Chairperson about notifying Ofsted.

- The designated safeguarding lead ensures that the 06.1c Confidential safeguarding incident report form is completed and sent to the Officer.

- Avenues such as performance management, training and supervision of staff will also be used instead of disciplinary procedures where these are appropriate and proportionate. If an allegation is ultimately upheld the LADO may also offer a view about what would be a proportionate response in relation to the accused person.

- The designated safeguarding lead must consider revising or writing a new risk assessment where appropriate.

- All allegations are investigated even if the person involved resigns or ceases to be a volunteer.

Allegations against the designated safeguarding lead.

- If a member of staff has concerns that the designated safeguarding lead has behaved in a way that indicates they are not suitable to work with children as listed above, this is reported to the designated officer following the setting's whistleblowing process, who will investigate further.
- During the investigation, the designated officer/manager will identify another suitably experienced person to take on the role of designated safeguarding lead.
- If an allegation is made against the designated officer/manager, then the Chairperson and committee are informed.

Recording

- A record is made of an allegation/concern, along with supporting information or it is entered on the file of the child,(if the allegation involves a specific child or children and the 06.1a Child welfare and protection summary is completed and placed in the front of the child's file.
- If the allegation refers to more than one child, this is recorded in each child's file
- If relevant, a child protection referral is made, with details held on the child's file.

Disclosure and Barring Service

- If a member of staff is dismissed because of a proven or strong likelihood of child abuse, inappropriate behaviour towards a child**,** or other behaviour that may indicate they are unsuitable to work with children such as drug or alcohol abuse, or other concerns raised during supervision when the staff suitability checks are done, a referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service is made.

Email: help@nspcc.org.uk
Ofsted provides guidance on how to make complaints about a provider