

THE MERIDALE ORGANISATION

MANAGING ALLEGATIONS AGAINST STAFF & VOLUNTEERS

Purpose and Aims

This document is to support and underpin The Merdale Organisation's Safeguarding Policy Statement.

Managing Allegations Made Against Staff / Volunteers

Any allegation or concern that a staff member, trustee or volunteer has behaved in a way that has harmed, or may have harmed, a child will be taken seriously and dealt with sensitively and promptly, regardless of where the alleged incident took place.

Depending on the situation, an appropriate response may involve:

- the police investigating a possible criminal offence
- your local child protection services making enquiries and/or assessing whether a child is in need of support
- your organisation following the relevant disciplinary procedures with individuals concerned.

We will make sure any children involved are given appropriate support.

This document shares best practice for managing allegations or concerns about abuse by someone who works or volunteers with children. All such personnel should read and understand our policies and procedures for managing allegations.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) is responsible for dealing with allegations or suspicions of abuse about someone who works with children. If there is a concern about this nominated person, it should be reported to their deputy or other senior manager who will liaise with the Trustee with Lead Responsibility to manage the process.

The nominated person will be fully trained in managing allegations against or concerns about abuse by a member of staff or volunteer and will know who to contact if any concerns are raised, such as the police or local authority's designated office. child protection services.

Whistleblowing

All those who work or volunteer with children should feel confident about challenging the behaviour of others and voicing concerns. They should also know who to contact if they feel unable to report an incident within their organisation. They can make a report to the police or local child protection services, or by contacting the NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line:

0800 028 0285
help@nspcc.org.uk

Responding to Concerns and Allegations

The Merdale Organisation takes any concerns raised about staff or volunteers seriously, regardless of who the person is, how long they've been involved with the organisation, or whether they are directly engaged by them.

The Designated Safety Officer will not attempt to investigate the matter, but will gather the facts of the case and keep written records.

If an allegation is made that a staff member or volunteer has:

- 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 or children in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children
- behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children.

It must be reported immediately to the relevant agencies (for example the NSPCC helpline on 0808 800 5000, the local child protection services or the police). The nominated person will liaise with the local child protection services and the police to ensure that he/she is responding appropriately.

If the allegation is against someone not employed directly, the organisation they work or volunteer for should be involved in the investigation.

In England, each local authority must have one or more designated officers whose role is to manage and oversee investigations of allegations against people who work with children (Department for Education, 2018c).

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) has created an online portal for charities in England to help manage safeguarding allegations made against an employee or volunteer:

<https://safeguarding.culture.gov.uk>

Resignations and 'Settlement Agreements'

If someone resigns from their post or refuses to cooperate with the process, this will not prevent an allegation being followed up.

'Settlement agreements' (where a person agrees to resign and the employer agrees not to pursue disciplinary action) must not be used in cases of alleged abuse.

Confidentiality and Support

Every effort will be made to maintain the confidentiality of all parties while an allegation or concern is being investigated. It is important to ensure everyone involved in the investigation understands this.

Consideration will be given to how best to support the children involved, their parents or carers, and individuals who have had an allegation made against them. This includes:

- telling parents or carers and the alleged person about the allegation as soon as possible (as long as this does not place any children at further risk of harm)
- telling them how you are going to manage the allegation
- keeping everyone informed about the progress and outcomes of the case.

Record Keeping

It's important to keep a clear and comprehensive summary of:

- all allegations that have been made
- details of how allegations have been followed up and investigated
- decisions made about the allegation and actions taken.

The Meridale Organisation will adhere to the NSPCC Guidelines on Child Protection Record Keeping and

Reporting

If a member of staff or volunteer is removed from working with children because they pose a risk of harm (or if they would have but the person has resigned or left), there is a legal duty to inform the relevant disclosure and barring agency. Failure to do this is a criminal offence.

In England, Wales and Northern Ireland, refer to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) (DBS, 2018). In Scotland, refer to Disclosure Scotland (Mygov.Scot, 2021).

A report will also be made to the appropriate regulatory bodies. This includes for example the Charity Commission in England, Northern Ireland and Wales.

Review Following an Allegation

If an allegation is substantiated it is vital to think about lessons that can be learnt. This will include:

- considering any factors that may have contributed to or failed to prevent abuse occurring
- reviewing safeguarding and child protection measures to ensure ongoing vigilance
- making changes to organisational policies and procedures as necessary.

In some cases, a case review may be appropriate. This means an independent reviewer will speak to all the agencies involved and consider the case. They will consider whether there are lessons that should be shared more widely to improve safeguarding practice.

Other Resources

The following resources provide further insight and guidance:

<https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/research-resources/briefings/preventing-abuse-positions-of-trust>
<https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/child-protection-system/england>

The Trustees will review this document periodically and no later than three years from the date below.

Signed: (On behalf of the Meridale Organisation)

Name:

Position:

Date: