

# Allegations against staff within the childrens workforce in Barnet

## Information about reporting allegations and for those subject to allegations



All organisations providing services to children must ensure that those who work with or on behalf of children and young people are competent, confident and safe to do so. Likewise anyone who comes into contact with children and young people in their work has a duty of care to safeguard and promote their welfare.

The vast majority of adults who work with children act professionally and aim to provide a safe and supportive environment which secures the well-being and very best outcomes for children and young people in their care. However, it is recognised that in this area of work tensions and misunderstandings can occur. It is here that the behaviour of adults can give rise to allegations of abuse being made against them. Allegations may be misplaced or malicious. They may arise from differing perceptions of the same event, but when they occur, they are inevitably distressing and difficult for all concerned.

Equally, it must be recognised that some allegations will be genuine and there are adults who will deliberately seek out, create or exploit opportunities to abuse children. It is therefore essential that a clear process exists for the investigation and resolution of allegations made for the benefit of all concerned.

### Who is covered by the allegations against staff process?

This process covers all persons working within the childrens workforce in either a paid or unpaid capacity and includes volunteers and foster carers. This includes anyone working in a health, education, social care or voluntary sector service setting as well as any other service provided to children: this includes contracted or commissioned services.

### Who is responsible for the allegations against staff process in Barnet?

The process is managed by Barnet's LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer). All local authorities must have a LADO who is responsible for

- managing individual cases
- providing advice and guidance
- liaising with police and other agencies
- monitoring progress of cases for timeliness, thoroughness and fairness.

The LADO can be contacted via **Barnet's Investigations Officer** for allegations against staff on 0208 359 6056.

### When is it necessary to contact the LADO?

All allegations that meet the following criteria must be reported to the LADO.

Where it is alleged that someone 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 in a way that indicates they are unsuitable to work with children.

The LADO can also be contacted for advice regarding concerns or suspicions about behaviour towards children by staff within Barnet's childrens workforce.

### **What happens when I contact the LADO?**

Most referrers will be asked to complete a referral form and where necessary provide other supporting information. The LADO will then complete an initial evaluation and provide advice regarding the pathway to be followed to resolve the allegation.

### **What are the possible options for following up an allegation?**

The LADO will decide whether the allegation made is a potential criminal offence in which case a referral will be made to the police. If the allegation indicates a child or children may be at risk of significant harm then a child protection investigation will be undertaken by Childrens Social Care. In these circumstances a Strategy Meeting is likely to be convened to share information about the allegation and plan the investigation and any actions needed to protect children. This meeting will be attended by the police, social workers and senior representatives from the organisation concerned including HR (human resources).

If the allegation does not indicate a potential criminal offence or child protection issue the matter may be passed back to the organisation managing the staff member to resolve under their

staffing ( disciplinary or standards) process or as a complaint.

### **Who makes allegations against staff?**

Allegations may be made by children, their parents, colleagues or others.

### **What information will parents be told?**

Parents should be told at the earliest opportunity if their child has made an allegation or there is a concern that they may have been harmed by someone working with them. Parents should be kept informed during the investigation process and be told the outcome.

### **How will children be assisted during the process?**

Children should be given the opportunity to share any concerns they have about their care and should be supported throughout the investigation process. They should also be told the outcome and provided with further support if required.

### **Can parents and children refer directly to the LADO?**

If an allegation relates to a possible criminal offence or child protection issue then parents or children can report their concerns direct to the LADO but in general issues should be raised with a senior member of staff within the organisation (not the person who is the subject of the allegation).

### **What happens if I am subject to an allegation?**

Your manager will contact the LADO for advice. This will include when it is appropriate to share details of the allegation with you and who will be investigating it. You should be offered information about support during the process, this may be via your union representative or a named individual within your workplace. It is

acknowledged that being subject to an allegation is a very stressful process.

### **Will I be suspended if I am subject to an allegation?**

Decisions about suspension are made on a case by case basis and depend on the nature and seriousness of the allegation. Whilst the LADO can offer advice only an employer may make a decision to suspend a staff member. Many people subject to allegations are not suspended although their working arrangements may be adjusted whilst the matter is followed up.

### **How long will an allegation take to investigate?**

It is important that allegations are investigated as quickly as possible for all concerned. Initial evaluations by the LADO begin immediately and initial advice is given within a few days and usually concluded within a month. More complex investigations or those involving the police can take longer but the LADO is expected to monitor these for timeliness and assist in resolving delays where possible.

### **What happens at the end of the process?**

Which ever process used to investigate the allegation (ie criminal, child protection or employer based) will be expected to form a conclusion about the concerns raised based on the available evidence. Following most allegations staff return to the work place and where this is decided support should be offered to enable this to happen successfully. If it is concluded that someone working with children has harmed a child or is unsuitable to work with children it is possible they will be dismissed by their employer and in these cases a referral will be made to ISA (the Independent Safeguarding Authority) to consider whether this person should be barred from working with children.

Whatever the outcome the LADO will assist the organisation in which the allegation occurred regarding any lessons to be learnt and ways in which safer working arrangements can be improved.

### **What records will be kept regarding allegations?**

It is a requirement that a summary of any allegations made and the outcome of any investigation is kept on the HR file of the person concerned. This record should be kept for 10 years or until retirement whichever is the sooner. Other records may be held by agencies involved in investigating allegations. Information about what information should be disclosed in references can be obtained via the LADO on the phone number above.

### **What can I do to prevent allegations being made against me?**

The publication Guidance for Safer Working Practice for Adults who Work with Children and Young People (2007) provides excellent advice about safeguarding children you are working with. This can be obtained via the LADO.

### **I am a manager of an organisation providing services to children - what are my responsibilities?**

Member organisations of Barnet's Safeguarding Children Board should have a named senior officer who has responsibility for ensuring that procedures are in place for dealing with allegations against staff.

All organisations should have an identified senior manager to whom allegations or concerns can be reported. All staff or volunteers should be made aware who this person is, who to contact in their absence and of the procedures relating to allegations against staff which should include the LADOs details. Anyone working with children should be subject to the appropriate checks

and be provided with clear expectations about what is expected from them in their contact with children. The safer working guidance detailed above is a useful framework to follow.

### **Where can I get further information?**

Further information is available within the following documents

- Working Together 2010 (detailed interagency guidance on safeguarding - Page 199 and Appendix 5 Page 356)
- London Child Protection Procedures 2010 (common child protection procedures for all London boroughs - Chapter 15, Page 441)

Further information is also available on the Barnet Safeguarding Children Board website.

**For more information:  
tel: 0208 359 6056  
or visit [www.barnetscb.org](http://www.barnetscb.org)**