

Allegations Policy

Allegations Procedure	
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Child Protection

Designated Senior Person (DSP)	Christine Smiles
Other Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSL's)	Deirdre Pearson, Jo Reiling
Designated Deputy Safeguarding Person (DDSP)	Karen Cowans

Guidelines

Any member of staff who suspects a young person may have been abused should report the matter immediately to the DSP, deputy or other DSL's in their absence. The report should be in written form consisting of concise, bullet pointed, factual information, after which, all information should be treated as confidential until you are told otherwise.

The DSP will inform the Chief Executive of Talbot House Trust. All further action will then be taken by the DSP, in accordance with Talbot House Trust procedures. A copy of these is appended to the Child Protection File.

Referrals

All intended referrals of suspected child abuse should be reported to the DSP in the first instance. All referrals must be made in the name of the DSP or other DSL or DDSP and if written by any other member of staff, must be sanctioned by the DSP, DSL or DDSP. The name of the DSP and his/her title together with the name of the member of staff writing the referral and their title must appear on the form. The Cause for Concern form can be obtained from the Admin Office or Care Office.

The DSP needs to feel secure in the knowledge that the appropriate member of staff has the overview for those learners for whom they are responsible.

In the absence of the DSP the following members of staff will deputise:

Jo Reiling
Deirdre Pearson
Karen Cowans

Internal Guidelines

Finding Out

Staff have regular daily contact with young people of Talbot House Trust and their extensive knowledge of them puts them in a unique position to identify abuse. They may find out about it in a number of ways:-

- i) Direct disclosure by the young person to the adult.
- ii) Their own observation of an injury. This is a very contentious area so care must be taken when interpreting any injury without accompanying, direct, disclosure.
- iii) Some third party, a friend of a young person, a taxi escort etc. may report suspicion to the teacher
- iv) The behaviour of the young person may change or show exaggerated traits of present behaviour. As with physical injuries, great care must be taken in interpretation in the absence of an accompanying disclosure.

Allegations Policy

Reporting

Report your concerns to the DSP immediately in writing, using 'Cause for Concern Form'

The written information should be:

- ✓ Factual
- ✓ Bullet pointed
- ✓ Dated
- ✓ Signed

Once you have reported your concerns to the DSP it is then their responsibility to assess and decide whether or not to proceed any further.

The DSP will inform the DSL's and DDSP. They will also consult staff within the Trust who have knowledge of the young person involved. If the decision is to proceed further, then Talbot House Trust Child Protection Policy will be followed and the Referral and Initial Information Record Form will be completed; if not then the concerns should be recorded on Cause for Concern.

The decision about whether or not you should report your concern to the DSP can be quite difficult. Remember two things.

- Even minor injuries, behaviour changes, or seemingly unimportant reports can be very significant when combined with information from other professionals who know the learner.
- Trust your judgment rather than fear over reaction. The consequences of misinterpretation and wrong reporting can be difficult, even unpleasant, but the consequences of not reporting will be much more unpleasant for the learner and infinitely more far reaching than those which are attendant upon misinterpretation.

Who does the DSP inform?

- Other DSLs
- Chief Executive of Talbot House Trust
- Newcastle Safeguarding Board
- The Social Care Team from the Local Authority involved with the young person

When and how does the DSP make this referral?

- Immediately by phone; follow it up with a written referral within 48 hours. Attach any report by the involved member of staff. Keep a record either in school or Chadersley.
- The Social Care Team involved with the young person will be responsible for any Child Protection enquiries and the future management of the case.

What further responsibilities does the DSP have?

- Ensure a response is gained to the referral. Attend and provide written reports for any future conferences and meetings, or delegate where appropriate.
- Continue to accurately record relevant details or information relating to the learner.

Staff Facing Allegations of Abuse

We all have a duty of care towards the young people we look after. The Governments Child Protection guidance "Working Together to Safeguard Children" (Department of Health, Home Office, Department for Education and Employment (1999)) offers clear advice on what should happen if somebody has concerns about the welfare of a young person, together with concerns that a young person may be suffering, or at risk of suffering abuse or neglect. The guidance also clearly explains how staff should deal with young people who allege that a member of staff have abused them.

Allegations Policy

General Principles

The welfare principle “The welfare of the child is Paramount” Children Act 1989 must be upheld at all times and in all cases. The young person must be listened to and any concerns taken seriously. Head Teachers and Managers also have a continuing duty of care to any staff member who become the subject of an allegation. They should ensure that staff in this position are treated fairly and offered professional support.

Examples that may be interpreted as abuse:

Physical Abuse. Any forms of physical assault (including attempts)

- Punching
- Kicking
- Pushing
- Smacking
- Slapping
- Shaking
- Throwing a missile at a pupil (chalk, board rubber etc)

Sexual Abuse. Any form of sexual assault (including attempts)

- Abuse of a position of trust
- Possession of indecent and pseudo indecent photographs of young people (including computer images)
- Showing indecent or pornographic material to young people
- Inappropriate touching, language, or behaviour towards any young person for sexual purposes
- Inappropriate use of text messaging, e-mail or other IT toward any young person for sexual purposes
- Emotional Abuse and Neglect.
- Racial comments or behaviour, or failing to address these in others.
- Homophobic comments or behaviour, or failing to address these in others.
- Bullying young people, or failing to address this in others.
- Persistent sarcasm.
- Belittling young people e.g. persistently placing a young person in a corner or a corridor.
- Creating a climate of fear in a classroom.
- Damaging a pupil’s self-esteem through persistent lack of warmth and positive regard.
- Inappropriate punishment e.g. placing a young person in a cupboard.
- Failing to protect a young person from physical harm or danger (e.g. school trips).
- Failing to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment e.g. where a young person sustains an injury).

The above examples are not exhaustive and only serve as a guide. Many of these behaviors’ do constitute a criminal offence some do not and some may not reach a threshold of significant harm, but they all constitute professional misconduct.

Ways in which concerns may come to notice:

- Direct disclosure by the young person
- Indirect disclosure by the young person through written/art work or through a friend
- Complaints from a parent or carer to:
 - A trusted member of staff
 - Social Services
 - Headteacher/Manager
 - Police

Allegations Policy

- Other colleagues or agencies
- Anonymously

Whistleblowing

If you have concerns about or if you have witnessed behaviour by a colleague that you consider in good faith to be abusive or inappropriate, it is important that you disclose these views without fear of retribution, even if the concerns are subsequently unsubstantiated. In such circumstances you will be supported in accordance with Talbot House Trust's Whistle Blowing Policy.

Listening to Young People

If a young person tells you that another member of staff has abused them you must listen to them.

The young person should be listened to but not interviewed or asked to repeat the account. Avoid questions, particularly leading questions.

The young person should not be interrupted when recalling significant events.

All information should be noted carefully, including details such as timing, setting, who was present and what was said, in the young person's own words. The account should be obtained verbatim or as near as possible.

Care should be taken not to make assumptions about what the young person is saying or to make interpretations.

Listened to means just that; on no account should suggestions be made to children as to alternative explanations for their worries.

The written record of the allegations should be signed and dated by the person who received them as soon as practicable.

All actions subsequently taken should be recorded.

Confidentiality

You cannot promise confidentiality to a young person who makes an allegation. In responding to a young person who makes a disclosure every effort should be made to create an environment conducive to speaking freely, but you must also make it clear to the young person that you will need to pass on the information in order to ensure protection. You should also explain to the young person that the matter will only be disclosed to those people who need to know about it.

Reporting to the Designated Persons

Following speaking to the young person you must then report the allegation to the designated person(s):

Designated Senior Person (DSP)	Christine Smiles
Other Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSL's)	Deirdre Pearson, Jo Reiling
Designated Deputy Safeguarding Person (DDSP)	Karen Cowans

In the event of one of these designated persons being accused or due to absence we feel it appropriate to have three designated members of staff.

At this point there would be an initial assessment of the situation taking into account all of the evidence available.

Allegations Policy

Outcomes

A decision will be made as to what will happen next depending upon the interpretation and professional judgement, based on the known facts. Where a complaint or allegation has been made against a member of staff and the young person is considered to be suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm a referral must be made to Social Services.

In simple terms, if the harm or risk of harm attributable to a member of staff falls within the category of either physical, sexual or emotional abuse or neglect, a referral should be made to Social Services.

When an allegation against an adult in school has been made the Head Teacher and the designated person must be informed immediately. There should be urgent initial consideration whether or not there is sufficient substance to an allegation to warrant an investigation.

The Head teacher/ designated person should contact the Senior Child Protection Officer – to inform and agree the management and referral route for allegation cases. In this instance, Melanie Scott is the Local Authority Designated Officer. Her contact details are:

Childrens Safeguarding Standards Unit
Newcastle Civic Centre
Barras Bridge
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE1 8PU

0191 211 6730

Melanie.scott@newcastle.gov.uk

An accurate record of all that has happened must be made to include facts of any injury, times, explanations, persons present at time and action taken by the school.

There could be one of four possible outcomes:

1. An immediate referral under Local Safeguarding Children Board guidelines
2. There is reason to believe abuse may have occurred and referral is needed under Local Safeguarding Children Board procedures or internal disciplinary procedures are necessary.
3. There is no foundation to the allegation.
4. If the allegation was instigated by inappropriate behaviour by someone employed by Talbot House Trust consideration is needed for disciplinary procedures.

When an allegation has been made against the Head Teacher or Registered Manager, the designated person should inform the Chief Executive who will have the responsibility to liaise with other agencies and inform the governing body.