



Timescales

The timescales mentioned are considered achievable in most instances, but if the nature or complexity of a case means they cannot be met the reasons should be recorded.

Confidentiality

Every effort should be made to maintain confidentiality and guard against unwanted publicity. The DSM should contact the LADO for advice about whether the GP/Manager should share information with parents or staff, and if so what information can be shared as the Police, Children's Social Care and the PCT Press office may need to be consulted.

Reports to DCSF and/or Regulatory Body

The DSM should consult the LADO about whether, and if so when, any regulatory body should be informed e.g. GMC. The DSM and LADO should also consider whether a report should be submitted to the DCSF for consideration of barring the individual from working with children.

Support

The DSM and LADO should discuss how to keep the child's parents/carers up to date and who is best placed to do this, and also how the child/ren concerned should be supported. The LADO should take advice from the Police and/or Children's Social Care if involved.

The member of staff should be advised to speak to his/her union or professional association, if a member, and provided with support during the process e.g.

through occupational health and/or employee welfare arrangements. If the member of staff is to return to work after a period of suspension, consideration should be given to how he/she can best be supported e.g. by a phased return and/or mentoring.

Record Keeping

A comprehensive summary of the allegation, how it was followed up and the decisions and action taken, should be kept on the member of staff's confidential personnel file and s/he provided with a copy.

Further Guidance

More detailed guidance can be found in:

- Working Together to Safeguard Children
<http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/resources-and-practice/IG00060/>
- Local Safeguarding Children Board procedures

This leaflet provides a brief guide to the process that should be followed, but if faced with an allegation against a member of staff it is strongly advised that the Designated Senior Manager and/or LA Designated Officer be consulted at the earliest opportunity

Designated Senior Manager (PCT)
020 8795 6748

Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)
020 8937 3139

HR/Personnel Adviser (PCT)
020 8795 6761

Police Child Abuse Investigation Team
020 8733 3503

Social Care Emergency Duty Team
020 8937 4875

GUIDANCE FOR INDEPENDANT CONTRACTORS

PHARMACISTS DENTIST OPTICIANS

Dealing with Allegations of Child Abuse Against Staff

April 2008





Introduction

This guide provides a summary of the process to be followed if an allegation is made from any source that a member of staff within a general practice has:

- behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child;
- possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child; or,
- behaved in a way that indicates s/he is unsuitable to work with children

Initial Action

The person first receiving the allegation should make a record of the details and date and sign the record. He/she should immediately inform the Manager designated to deal with such matters or to his/her deputy e.g. if the Manager is absent or the subject of the allegation.

The /Manager should countersign the record and then consult the Designated Senior Manager (DSM) in the PCT who will decide whether to consult the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) responsible for dealing with allegations against staff and volunteers. The accused member of staff should not be informed unless this has been agreed with the LADO, as Police or Social Care may need to be consulted. The case should not be discussed with other members of staff, as this might prejudice future criminal or disciplinary processes. Information should only be shared on a 'need to know basis'.

Out of Hours

If a serious allegation is reported outside normal working hours, and the DSM/LADO is not available, the emergency duty social worker and/or Police should be contacted and the DSM/LADO informed the next working day.

Gathering Information

Subject to advice from the DSM/LADO, the Manager should obtain information about the date and location of the alleged incident and the names of any witnesses. The Manager can seek clarification of any points, but he/she should not interview the child, any possible witnesses, or the accused member of staff, or ask them to write an account of what happened. It is the job of Police and Social Care to investigate allegations of child abuse.

Strategy Discussion

The DSM and LADO will decide whether to make a referral to the police and/or children's social care, unless the allegation is demonstrably false. If a referral is made, a multi-agency Strategy Discussion will probably take place either by phone or meeting in order to share relevant information and determine whether an investigation needs to be undertaken and if so by whom. The Manager and or DSM are likely to be invited to take part and they should seek advice from the LADO about what to expect and what information they may be able to provide.

The HR provider for the practice should be able to provide information about the accused member of staff e.g. date of birth, address, family details where known, and whether s/he has been subject of previous allegations or concerns. Relevant details of the child should also be obtained and the child protection designated person within the practice may be able to assist in this regard.

Suspension

Suspension should be considered in cases where:

- there is cause to suspect a child is at risk of significant harm, or
- a police investigation is warranted, or

- the allegation is so serious, it might be grounds for dismissal

Suspension should not, however, be an automatic response and alternatives may be appropriate. The LADO should canvass the views of Police and Children's Social Care, and HR may also provide advice.

Disciplinary Proceedings

If there is no criminal investigation and formal disciplinary action is not required, appropriate action should be instituted within 3 working days.

If a disciplinary investigation is needed, the DSM/LADO should be consulted. The nature/complexity of the case or a lack of resources may mean that it should be conducted by someone independent. The investigation may also need to be delayed until after any criminal proceedings.

The DSM should maintain regular contact with the LADO in order to keep the Manager up to date with the progress of any external proceedings, and thereby avoid delay in starting any disciplinary process.

If Police and/or Social Care are involved, they should aim to provide information relevant to any disciplinary process within 3 working days of the end of the case.

If a disciplinary investigation is conducted, the report should be completed within 10 working days. The Manager should then consult the DSM/LADO within 2 working days in order to decide whether a disciplinary hearing should be held.

A disciplinary hearing, if needed, should be held within a further *15 working days*.

