

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Allegations of Abuse against Aspired Futures Trustees, Staff Member or Volunteers Policy

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Version	3
Approved at team meeting (date)	12/04/16
Cross Reference	Disclosure and Baring Service, Whistleblowing Policy

Purpose of this document

To ensure that all trustees, staff and volunteers are aware of the process which must be followed if there is any concern in regards to allegations of abuse. Aspired Futures (AF) are committed to make sure that all allegations are dealt with utmost seriousness.

Details of Policy

Where allegations of abuse are made against a trustee, member of staff or volunteer, the matter should be referred to Local Authority Children's Social Care in the same way as any other concern about possible abuse.

Each local authority has a Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) to deal with such matters. If there are allegations against a member of staff, volunteers or trustees board, in relation to child welfare issues, these should be referred to the LADO who compiles a record of all allegations against children in the council area.

The name of Blackpool Councils LADO is Amanda Quirk and her contact number is 01253 477541.

The name of Lancashire County Council LADO is Tim Booth and his contact number is 01772 536694

The LADO will take responsibility for following the procedures that have been drawn up for such situations; this may involve contacting the police to investigate any criminal activity.

OFSTED must also be informed of any allegations as soon as is reasonably practicable, at least within 14 days of the allegation being made. A registered provider who without reasonable excuse fails to comply with this requirement commits an offence; this will be a senior member of the AF team responsibility.

OFSTED contact telephone number is: 0300 123 1231

Any investigation may well have three related, but independent strands:

- Child Protection enquiries, relating to the safety and welfare of any children who may or may not have been involved
- A police investigation into a possible offence
- Disciplinary procedures, where it appears that the allegations may amount to misconduct or gross misconduct on the part of the staff, volunteer or trustee.

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The investigation should be completed as soon as possible consistent with its effective conduct. The police and other relevant agencies should always agree jointly when to inform the suspect of allegations, which are the subject of criminal proceedings. The procedures AF will need to take will follow logically from the steps the authorities, specifically the police, decide to take and their advice should be followed.

In cases involving allegations of abuse, as opposed to 'minor' breaches of the code of conduct there is likely to be a suspension so the person involved will need to be told at that point. She/he needs to be given a reason for the suspension but in such a way that the child is not put at risk and the police inquiry is not compromised. There is likely to be a strategy meeting where all of this should be agreed.

Trustees, staff, volunteers and other individuals about whom there are concerns should be treated fairly and honestly, and should be provided with support throughout the investigation process as should others who are also involved. They should be helped to understand the concerns expressed and the process being operated, and be clearly informed of the outcome and the implications of disciplinary or related processes.

- If the allegation is against a trustee, member of staff or volunteer, the concern should be reported to the AF Service Strategic Lead for Safeguarding and or other members of the Senior Team immediately.
- The Service Strategic Lead, if not the subject of the concerns, is primarily responsible for taking all reasonable steps necessary to secure the safety of any child who may be at risk, by, for example, removing the person who is the subject of the allegation from any situation involving children.
- The Chair of Trustees and/or senior member of staff are responsible for liaising with the police and Children's Social Care about allegations.
- It is important to remember the Service protocols for confidentiality and only those with a need to know should be privy to the details of the situation. This is particularly so for allegations of sexual abuse.
- Paper and electronic records relating to the allegation should be made secure to prevent them being removed or changed.
- Following the investigation, disciplinary procedures may need to be invoked. See disciplinary procedures and confidentiality and sharing information.
- If an AF team member has genuine concerns regarding a person in a responsible role, where they are in contact with children and young people, then they have a duty of care to inform the Disclosure and Baring Service (DBS) to ensure those concern will be investigated and the outcome recorded. A referral should be made using the DBS referral form (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dbs-referrals-form-and-guidance>)

In the case of a member of staff reporting concerns about a colleague, reference should be made to the AF Whistleblowing Policy. This procedure is appropriate where the employee or volunteer has genuine concerns about malpractice, unsafe or unlawful activities within the service and it details the appropriate support which should be provided, i.e. the right to advice and support, and to information about legal representation.

The Government and the relevant agencies are clear that all children and young people, no matter what situation they are in, should be protected from abuse. If any member of the AF team observe or hear anything which causes them to have concerns or to suspect that a child is being abused by someone within any of the AF programs they must follow the procedures outlined in this policy.