

SNAAP Safeguarding Complaints Procedure

These procedures are for use where the complaint is in respect of the safeguarding of children, young people and vulnerable adults and should only be used if an allegation has been made against a member of staff, volunteer or trustee which could be construed as abusive behaviour, or an abuse of trust.

If an allegation or complaint is made, you must:

- Take it seriously.
- Listen to the complaint and ask the complainant if they will put it in writing so as to ensure that the listener has not missed anything or misinterpreted what the complainant is saying. (Failure to give a written complaint does NOT mean that the complaint will not be considered or treated seriously)
- If necessary, write out the complaint whilst the complainant is there, asking him / her to check it and sign and date it when it is completed. All relevant known contact details must be included. Please note, this not a statement, nor is it part of an investigation at this point, merely a written note of the actual complaint.
- Give the document to the Safeguarding Lead.
- The safeguarding lead, on receipt of the written complaint or a verbal account of the complaint, will then contact the Safeguarding Officer.
- The Lead Safeguarding Officer, through consultation with the Chairperson/Directors of SNAAP, will decide whether to pass it to the Kent Safeguarding Board or another agency, eg police, social care services or LADO or whether there is an internal case required. No safeguarding decision should be made in isolation.
- The referring officer should ask the receiving agency to keep them informed and ask if they could be included in any strategy meetings which may be held.
- The person making the original complaint must be informed that other agencies are involved and that s/he will be kept informed as far as is possible.

When the investigation into the allegation/complaint has been completed, SNAAP must then consider the employment/deployment issues. This employment/ deployment investigation MUST be carried out regardless of whether the subject of the investigation is still working for SNAAP.

If the individual(s) has/have been prosecuted and found guilty then there is no need to carry out a full investigation. The DBS must be informed.

If the case has not been considered in Court, then SNAAP must carry out an employment investigation to ascertain on the balance of probabilities that the offence took place.

Ideally two Directors should conduct the investigation which must be as follows:

- To conduct an open and transparent investigation into the circumstances of the case, ensure the investigation is carried out ethically and proportionately with regards to everyone involved.
- Purpose : to establish the truth of the matter and to ensure any child welfare concerns are addressed effectively .

- To ensure the investigation is carried out by people with the appropriate skills set to help in minimising any distress to all those involved and carry out an effective, ethical and proportionate investigation.
- The investigators' job will be to gain a clear picture of what actually is alleged, an evidence based opinion of what did happen, make recommendations as to future action, and prepare the case for the management side of any disciplinary hearing which may be necessary. It is not the investigators' place to make decisions merely recommendations on the balance of probability and to present the "case for the prosecution" if required.
- To produce a file of evidence which will allow the matter to be dealt with appropriately and to ensure any child safeguarding issues can be addressed effectively.
- Timescales: the investigation should be dealt with due diligence to minimise distress to those involved but will be dictated by the needs of those involved, unless there are any immediate child protection concerns.

The investigators should:-

- Meet with the complainant and gain a clear and accurate view of the actual complaint with any evidence which is available.
- Speak to the investigating officers (police or social care) and ascertain if they have any additional information which will help the employment investigation.
- Meet with any other witnesses which may have been identified by the original complainant or the investigative officers to gain a clear picture of their viewpoint.
- Meet with the person against whom the allegation is made and gain a clear picture of his / her / their side of the situation.

The people with whom the investigators are meeting should be informed of the confidential nature of the investigation and permitted a supporter if they so wish.

All meetings should be carefully noted and a copy of the resulting statement typed out and sent to them for approval and signature within a few days. The completed statements will form the evidence base for any further action. The officers should have access to legal advice at any point in these investigations.

On completion of the investigation, the officers concerned should be in a position to make recommendations as to further action. These actions will range from No Further Action to Dismissal and Barring. At any point in the investigation, if the officers deem it reasonable, or if further, previously unknown information comes to light, they could return the case to the Police, Social Care Services or LADO and request further formal investigation.

At the close of the investigation the officers will draw up an evidence based case giving their recommendations and the reasons for these. If the result is that no further action should be taken, the complainant, child's family and alleged perpetrator must be informed of the decision and the reasons for it.

If the recommendation is for some form of action to take place, then SNAAP should follow their disciplinary procedures.

Date last reviewed: 20th July 2023

Date next review due: July 2024