



CHUMS

**Mental Health and
Emotional Wellbeing
Service for Children
and Young People**

Allegations & Concerns Against Staff & Volunteers

Who Work With Children & Families Policy

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Background

The CHUMS service exists to care for children and their parent/guardian/carers at a time when they may feel particularly vulnerable or anxious. If services are not satisfactory, this may cause increased anxiety. It is important that the CEO and Safeguarding Lead are made aware of any dissatisfaction in a timely fashion. This policy has been designed to enable children and their families or a member of the community to be heard when they have a concern with regard to a member of staff or a volunteer, working on behalf of CHUMS.

Objectives

All people voicing concerns or allegations will have equal rights to fair treatment and will not be treated differently as a result of raising their concerns.

Concerns and allegations will be treated seriously and dealt with fairly and promptly.

Concerns and allegations will be treated with an open mind and will be investigated without prejudice.

People voicing concerns or allegations have the right to confidentiality but anonymous concerns may not be investigated as there may be a lack of information to ensure any outcome.

It is not always possible for the complainant to receive the outcome they hoped for but if they feel their concern has been dealt with appropriately, then this is a positive outcome.

Procedure

Any allegation or concern against a member of staff or volunteer should be reported to the CEO and Safeguarding Lead as soon as possible.

All concerns and allegations will be recorded and confidential records maintained.

The CEO and Safeguarding Lead will decide from the nature of the concern who needs to be involved in dealing with it. The concern or allegation will be acknowledged within 2 working days.

Where there is any concern that someone has behaved in a way that has harmed, or may have harmed a child, or possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child or behaved towards a child in a way that indicates unsuitability to work with children, the concern will be reported to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) who will assist with providing advice and guidance, liaise with the police and

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other agencies where applicable and manage and oversee individual cases where applicable.

Where there is any concern that someone has behaved in a way that has caused harm or may have harmed an adult, the concern will be reported to the relevant lead in the Safeguarding of Vulnerable Adults (SOVA) team within the relevant Borough Council.

If the concern or allegation does not meet one of the above criteria the CEO will consider whether the matter needs addressing via the normal complaints or disciplinary procedure. If this is the case the concern or allegation will be thoroughly investigated and responded to within 14 days.

Where a concern or allegation is investigated by the LADO or SOVA team the case may take up to a year for a full investigation to be completed.

During the course of an investigation the employee or volunteer will be suspended from duty if there is an allegation of harm to a child or adult and may be suspended from duty as a result of other allegations or concerns. Where a volunteer is also working within a child centred environment, CHUMS has a safeguarding duty to inform his/her employer.

If the response to an internal investigation is not satisfactory to the complainant he/she will be advised that they should write to the CEO of CHUMS Social Enterprise CIC within 14 days. The CEO or nominated senior manager will provide a reply within 14 days of the date of that letter. This reply will be final and no further correspondence can be entered into by CHUMS concerning this particular complaint.

Families and members of the community will be advised of their right to request, within 28 days, an independent investigation to be conducted, by writing to the Chair of CHUMS or other nominated Board member, if they are dissatisfied with the response from the service.

If the complainant remains dissatisfied he/she has the right to pursue his/her complaint with the relevant Ombudsman.

Responsibilities of Staff and Volunteers

An employee or volunteer may become aware that a concern or allegation is to be made against them in a number of ways. Employees/volunteer has a responsibility to:

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Where a concern is raised directly with the individual, the employee or volunteer is expected to try and address the issue in an appropriate way at the time where applicable.

Where this is not appropriate the individual must advise the complainant of the complaints procedure and inform his/her service lead of the situation immediately.

If the employee or volunteer receives a written complaint s/he must inform his/her service lead immediately.

When a concern or allegation is being investigated, the employee or volunteer may be asked for a statement outlining their account of events. It is important that this is given promptly. It is important to establish as fully as possible the sequence of events leading up to the incident and the employee or volunteer should note the following key points when writing their account:

- Use chronological order, giving dates, times, locations etc.
- Do not use jargon or abbreviations
- Obtain any records needed to support the account and provide originals to the relevant investigating officer
- Respond in detail to the specific areas of concern
- Identify any other personnel involved
- If relevant, include references to any policies, procedures or guidelines
- Stick to facts - speculation or opinions are not acceptable
- Avoid hostility towards the person who has raised the concern
- Be honest – if the service provided was below an acceptable standard or a problem occurred – say so
- Your account should be signed and dated and you should retain a copy

Support for Staff and Volunteers

Being involved in a concern or allegation which is being investigated can be a stressful time. It is acknowledged that:

Adverse events which may lead to a concern or allegation do not always mean there was an error on behalf of an individual.

When investigating concerns CHUMS is looking at what happened and should have happened, not who did something wrong.

All staff and volunteers will be treated fairly and honestly and will be kept fully informed of the progress of the investigation as well as the outcome.

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Outcomes

If there are any learning outcomes from the investigation, including changes to practice, procedures or any training requirements, these must be followed up and implemented.

It is good practice to provide evidence of changes/improvements to the complainant and/or the investigating authority.

If, as a result of an investigation, disciplinary action is deemed necessary, this will be dealt with in accordance with the company's normal disciplinary procedure.

If you are a volunteer and you would like more information about this, please speak to an appropriate member of staff or the Safeguarding Lead for CHUMS, currently Debbie Robson, Head of Service.