

## Dealing with allegations made about another child

Dealing  
with allegations made against another child

This  
procedure explains what to do if child protection allegations are  
made against another child involved with the BTBA

Aims  
and purpose of procedure

The  
aims of this procedure are:

-  
  
to  
ensure that children who receive the services of the BTBA and any  
other children who may come to the attention of the BTBA are  
protected and supported following an allegation that they may have  
been abused by another child or young person involved with the BTBA

-  
  
to  
ensure that there is a fair, consistent and robust response to any  
allegations of this nature so that the risk posed to other children  
by the child/young person in question is managed effectively

-  
  
to  
facilitate an appropriate level of investigation into allegations,  
whether they relate to recent alleged activity, said to have taken  
place during the time that the child/young person in question has  
been involved with the BTBA or whether they relate to abuse which  
allegedly took place prior to the child's/young person's  
involvement with the BTBA

-  
  
to  
ensure that the BTBA continues to fulfil its responsibilities  
towards children and young people who may be subject to such  
investigations and are in need of support

-

to ensure that there is an appropriate response in situations where allegations are unfounded or deemed to be malicious in origin.

The purpose of the procedure is to provide a clear direction to staff that are called upon to deal with such allegations and to manage investigations and care plans which may result from them.

This procedure applies to:

-  
any member of staff, volunteer or trustee to whom an allegation of abuse has been made which suggests that another child or young person is responsible

-  
anyone in a managerial position, including the named person for child protection, line managers and supervisors, who may be required to deal with such allegations and manage investigations and care plans that result from them.

Different types of abuse

Types of abuse that one child might inflict upon another are most likely to be

either physical abuse or sexual abuse.

Physical abuse is violence causing injury or occurring regularly during childhood. It happens when:

-  
a child is hurt or injured by being hit, shaken, squeezed, thrown, burned, scalded, bitten or cut

-  
someone tried to drown or suffocate a child

-  
someone gives a child poison, alcohol or inappropriate drugs

-  
someone fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child

In some cases the injuries will be caused deliberately. In others they may be accidental but caused by the child being knowingly put at risk.

Sexual abuse occurs when someone uses power or control to involve a child in sexual activity in order to gratify the abuser's own sexual, emotional or financial needs or desires. It may include:

-  
forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening

-  
encouraging

children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways

-

showing  
children pornographic material or involving them in the production  
of such material

-

involving  
children in watching other people's sexual activity or in  
inappropriate discussions about sexual matters.

Emotional  
abuse is  
persistent or severe emotional ill-treatment of a child that is  
likely to cause serious harm to his/her development. It may include:

-

persistently  
denying the child love and affection

-

regularly  
making the child feel frightened by shouts, threats or any other  
means

-

hurting  
another person or a pet in order to distress a child

-

being  
so over-protective towards the child that he/she is unable to  
develop or lead a normal life

-

exploiting  
or corrupting a child eg by involving him/her in illegal behaviour

-  
conveying  
to the child the message that he/she is worthless, unlovable,  
inadequate, or only valuable insofar as they meet the needs of  
another person. This may or may not include racist, homophobic or  
other forms of abuse.

Neglect  
involves  
persistently failing to meet a child's physical, psychological or  
emotional needs. It may include:

-  
failing  
to ensure that a child's basic needs for food, shelter, clothing,  
health care, hygiene and education are met

-  
failing  
to provide appropriate supervision to keep a child out of danger.  
This could include lack of supervision of particular activities or  
leaving a child alone in the house.

Ways  
that allegations might be made against another child/young person  
involved with the BTBA

-  
A child  
or parent/carer might make a direct allegation against another child  
or young person.

-  
A child  
or parent/carer might express discomfort with the behaviour of  
another child or young person that falls short of a specific  
allegation.

-  
Another  
child, member of staff or volunteer may directly observe behaviour  
from one child/young person towards another that gives cause for  
concern.

-

The group/organisation may be informed by a parent or by the police or another statutory authority that a child or young person is the subject of an investigation.

-

A child or young person may volunteer information to the organisation that he/she has harmed another child or is at risk of doing so, or has committed an offence against or related to a child.

Child protection or bullying?

When faced with a situation of one child or young person behaving inappropriately towards another, a decision needs to be made about whether the problem behaviour constitutes bullying or a child protection concern. This is a decision that needs to be reached by the named person for child protection, in consultation with the member responsible for the child, the member's area secretary and, if necessary, the local authority children's social care department.

If the conclusion is that the behaviour is an example of bullying, and if both children attend the group/organisation, it needs to be dealt with under the anti-bullying policy and procedure.

If it is behaviour that could be described as child abuse and has led to the victim possibly suffering significant harm, then it must be dealt with under child protection procedures. This should include all incidents of sexual assault and all but the most minor incidents of physical assault.

This checklist can be used to help inform the decision: Bullying

-

The difference of power between the bully and the person being bullied is relatively small.

-

The bullying behaviour may be from a number of children/young people acting in a group rather than from one child acting alone.

-

It may also, but not necessarily, be directed towards a group of other children rather than an individual child.

-

The behaviour involves teasing or making fun of someone, excluding a child from games and conversations, pressurising other children not to be friends with someone, spreading hurtful rumours or circulating inappropriate photographs/images/drawings, cyberbullying, shouting at or verbally abusing someone, stealing someone's possessions, making threats, or harassment on the basis of race, gender, sexuality or disability.

-

The behaviour has not previously been a concern and the bully or bullies may have been responding to group pressure.

-

The behaviour is perceived as bullying by the victim.

Please note: physical or sexual assault, or forcing someone to do something embarrassing, harmful or dangerous is also included in the list of bullying behaviours in this toolbox, but are the most likely to constitute a child protection concern if the victim suffers significant harm as a result of the behaviour.

Child protection concerns

-

The difference of power between the child who is abusing and the person being abused is significant e.g. there is an age difference of more than two years, there is a significant difference in terms of size or level of ability, the abuser holds a position of power (such as being a helper, volunteer or informal leader) or the victim is

significantly more vulnerable than the other child or young person.

-

The behaviour involves sexual assault or physical assault (other than the most minor physical assault).

-

The child who is the victim of the behaviour may have suffered significant harm.

-

The behaviour may not necessarily be perceived by the victim as abusive, particularly if it is sexual in nature.

-

The behaviour is not a one-off incident and is part of a pattern of concerning behaviour on the part of the child or young person who is abusing.

-

The behaviour, if sexual, is not part of normal experimentation that takes place between children and young people.

Sexual abuse or normal experimentation?

All children and young people develop an interest in their own sexuality from a young age, and seek to learn about sex from their peers. It is important not to label normal, healthy behaviour as deviant or abusive. It is equally important not to allow sexually abusive behaviour perpetrated by one child or young person towards another to go unchecked, as this is harmful both for the victim and the perpetrator.

There are ways of assessing whether sexual behaviour between children and young people is abusive or not. Indicators of abusive behaviour include:



-  
there  
is a significant difference in age, dominance or understanding  
between the children/young people

-  
the  
behaviour was accompanied by the use of threats or bribes

-  
the  
behaviour was carried out in secret.

For the  
purposes of this procedure however, it is enough to say that if there  
is any question that the behaviour could be abusive, the matter  
should be discussed with the local authority children's social care  
department or with the NSPCC Helpline (0808 800 5000).

This can  
initially take place without the names of the children or young  
people being disclosed, although such information will have to be  
provided if the view of the children's social care department or  
the NSPCC is that the behaviour may constitute significant harm and  
that an investigation is needed.

What  
to do if you have child protection concerns

Is the child who  
has been allegedly abused, or the child who has allegedly perpetrated  
the abuse, in immediate danger or does either of them need emergency  
medical attention?

-  
If  
either child is in immediate danger and is with you, remain with  
him/her and call the police if you are unable to remove the danger  
yourself.

-  
If  
the child is elsewhere, contact the police and explain the situation  
to them.

-

If a child needs emergency medical attention, call an ambulance and, while you are waiting for it to arrive, get help from your first aider.

-

If the first aider is not available, use any first aid knowledge that you may have yourself to help the child.

-

You also need to contact your BTBA National Council Member or named person for child protection to let them know what is happening.

A decision will need to be made about when and who should inform the families of both the child who has been abused and the child who has allegedly perpetrated the abuse, as well as the local authority children's social care department.

If the child who is the alleged victim is not known to the BTBA it is not our role to inform the child's family. Even if the child who is the alleged victim is known, the police and/or the health services, should be part of the decision making process if they have been contacted.

The paramount consideration should always be the welfare of the children and young people involved. Issues that will need to be taken into account are:

-

the children's wishes and feelings

-

the parents' right to know (unless this would place the child who has allegedly perpetrated the abuse in danger, or would interfere with a criminal investigation)

-

the  
impact of telling or not telling the parents

-

the  
current assessment of the risk to the child who has been abused and  
the source of that risk

-

the  
current assessment of any risk to the child who has allegedly  
perpetrated the abuse and the source of that risk

-

any  
risk management plans that currently exist for either child.

Once any immediate  
danger or emergency medical need has been dealt with, the procedure  
set out below should be followed:

-

The  
member of staff who has been informed of the allegation or who has  
the concern, should make notes of what he/she has been told or of  
his/her direct concerns using the reporting form, and should discuss  
these with his/her BTBA National Council Member within 24 hours. The  
named person for child protection should also be involved in the  
discussion.

-

If  
both children/young people are known to the BTBA and if their  
families do not already know about the allegation or concern, the  
member of staff, manager or named person should discuss it with them  
unless:

-

the view is that someone (for example the child who has allegedly perpetrated the abuse) may be put in danger by the family being informed

-

informing the family might interfere with a criminal investigation.

If any of these circumstances apply, discussions with the families should only take place after this has been agreed with the local authority children's social care department.

-

If only the child who is alleged to have harmed another child is known to the BTBA then, subject to the considerations set out in above, discussions with only this child's family should take place.

-

The child who is the subject of the allegation should also be informed of what has been said about him/her. However, if the view is that children's social care or the police should be involved, the child should only be informed after discussion and agreement with these agencies. These agencies may have views about what information should be disclosed to the child/young person at this stage.

-

If there is still uncertainty about whether the allegation or concern constitutes a child protection issue, the named person (or BTBA National Council Member if named person not available) should discuss with children's social care department or with the NSPCC Helpline without disclosing the identity of either child/family.

-

If, having discussed the situation fully and taken advice if necessary, the manager/supervisor and the named person concludes that the alleged behaviour does not constitute a child protection issue, then consideration should be given to whether the anti-bullying policy and procedure should be used (if both children are known to the organisation) and

whether either or both children should be referred for other services.

-

If the view is that the behaviour does indeed amount to a child protection issue, the named person should refer both children to the local authority children's social care department and confirm the referral in writing within 24 hours.

-

Pending the outcome of the referral to the children's social care department and the possible investigation or assessment that may follow from this, any risk that may be posed to other children by the child who has allegedly harmed another child will need to be carefully managed. This should be done on an inter-agency basis in accordance with procedures developed by the local safeguarding children board for children who display harmful behaviour towards others.

-

The named person should enquire of the children's social care department whether these procedures are being used and, if so, should ask to be involved in or at least kept informed of inter-agency decisions made in accordance with these procedures.

-

If the procedures are not being used but the BTBA remains concerned that the child/young person could pose a risk to other children, then the named person and the BTBA National Council Member should consider whether the child/young person can continue to be involved with the BTBA and, if so, on what basis. This is a situation that needs to be kept under regular review as the investigation and assessment conducted by the statutory agencies is carried out and reaches a conclusion. It may also need to be reviewed regularly following the conclusion of the assessment process, as the child or young person may be receiving support that should, with time, reduce the level of risk he/she presents.

-

If the allegation is found to be without substance or fabricated, the BTBA will consider referring the child who was said to have been harmed to the children's social care department for them to assess whether he/she is in need of services (for example, the child may

have been abused by someone else).

-

If it is felt that there has been malicious intent behind the allegation, the BTBA will discuss with the police whether there are grounds to pursue any action against the person responsible.

What should I say to a child who says that he/she or another child is being abused by another child/young person?

-

Reassure the child that he/she has done the right thing by telling someone about it.

-

Tell him/her that you now have to do what you can to keep him/her (or the child who is the subject of the allegation) safe.

-

Let the child know what you are going to do next and who else needs to know about it.

-

Let the child tell his/her whole story. Don't try to investigate or quiz the child, but make sure that you are clear as to what he/she is saying.

-

If possible, explain to the child's parent/carer what has happened. Do this first without the child there, and then summarise it again in front of the child so that it is an open subject between parent/carer and child. This may enable them to talk about it together more easily.

-

Check  
out what the child would like to happen as a result of what he/she  
has said, but don't make or infer promises you can't keep.

-

Give  
the child the ChildLine phone number (0800 1111).

-

Make  
sure that the parent/carer has support too.

What  
should I say to a child/young person who says that he/she has abused  
another child?

-

Reassure  
the child that he/she has done the right thing by telling someone  
about it.

-

Tell  
him/her that you now have to do what you can to keep him/her and the  
child who has been abused safe.

-

Let the  
child know what you are going to do next and who else needs to know  
about it.

-

Let the  
child tell his/her whole story. Don't try to investigate or quiz  
the child, but make sure that you are clear as to what he/she is  
saying.

-

If  
there is no risk to the child from the child's parent/carer, then

explain to the parent/carer what has happened. Do this firstly without the child there, and then summarise it again in front of the child so that it is an open subject between parent/carer and child. This may enable them to talk about it together more easily.

-

**Check**  
out what the child expects to happen as a result of what he/she has said. Offer reassurance where appropriate but don't make or infer promises you can't keep.

-

**Reassure**  
the child that, with help, the problem can be sorted out and that what has happened does not make him/her an abuser for life.

-

**Give**  
the child the ChildLine phone number.

-

**Remember**  
that the child who has behaved in this way is a child in need of support.

-

**Make**  
sure that the parent/carer has support too.

**Recording**  
the concerns

**Use**  
the reporting form in this toolbox to record the concern and how it is dealt with. The relevant sections of the form should be completed and signed at each stage of the procedure. It can be used to forward information to the statutory child protection authorities if a referral to them is needed.



BTBA Child Protection Officer acknowledges the Safe Network with help in formulating these procedures.

July  
2012