

Allegations Policy

Read in conjunction with *Notes on allegations Policy*

Contact statutory agencies
without delay:
Social Services or Police
Follow the normal Reporting Process

Follow the Reporting Process
without delay:
Leader
↓
Leader in charge of organisation
↓
Designated Person/Minister
↓
Taking Care Office
↓
Consult with statutory authorities if required

1. Is the child in immediate danger?

YES

NO

Follow the advice given and do not carry out your own investigation.

2. Are the Police/Social Services carrying out an investigation?

YES

NO

Proceed to question 3.

Suspend the staff member/volunteer while the allegation is being investigated.

3. Are there concerns that the volunteer/staff member may continue to pose a risk to children?

YES

NO

Allow the staff member/volunteer to continue while the allegation is being looked into.

Put preventative measures in place
e.g. Further Training

4. Is the allegation substantiated?
Speak with the person who made the allegation and the person whom the allegation was made against to help establish if the allegation was substantiated.

YES

NO

Inform (in writing) the person making the allegation and the person whom the allegation was made of the outcome.

The person must be referred to the Disclosure and Barring Service.
This is a legal requirement.

5. Has the volunteer/staff member been removed from regulated activity (either through instruction or their own volition) because they caused harm or pose a risk of harm to a child?

YES

NO

Proceed to question 6.

Kirk Session should review the Child Protection Policy and implement any changes

6. Do any amendments need to be made to the child protection policy or practices of the congregation or organisation in light of this allegation?

YES

NO

No further action required.

Allegations Policy Notes

1. Is the child in immediate danger?

- This is an Allegations Policy for allegations made by or on behalf of a child or children. This policy does not refer to allegations made by adults who are at risk or on their behalf.
- If there is a child who is in immediate danger the priority must always be that they are protected and in a safe place. Therefore social services or police should be contacted immediately.

In Northern Ireland, the contact details are as follows:

- Non-Emergency PSNI: 101 / Emergency PSNI: 999
- Social Services (out of hours): (028) 9504 9999

In the Republic of Ireland, you should contact:

- Garda (in an emergency): 999 or 112
- Your local Garda station (in a non-emergency)
- Your local Child and Family Agency Social Workers

- Once a child is protected and in a safe place, it is important that the normal Reporting Process (as found in the Taking Care Guidelines) is also carried out. Equally, if a child is *not* thought to be in any danger then the normal Reporting Process should be carried out.
- If the allegation concerns the Minister or a member of his/her family, the Clerk of Presbytery should be contacted.

2. Are the Police/Social Services carrying out an investigation?

- Any investigation carried out by the authorities would supersede an organisational investigation. However, the Designated Person or Minister and Taking Care Office must still be contacted.

3. Are there concerns that the volunteer/staff member may continue to pose a risk to children?

- If there are concerns that the volunteer/staff member may continue to pose a risk to children then they should be suspended.
- There may, however, be occasions when suspension is not appropriate in which case advice should be sought. For example, if an allegation is made against a helper who has learning difficulties.

4. Is the allegation substantiated?

- Efforts should be made to ascertain if the allegation is substantiated or not. For example, if a leader was accused of acting inappropriately towards a child it may be advised to ask other children or leaders who were present at the time what, if anything, they saw or heard.
- If the allegation was substantiated, preventative measures should be put in place to ensure that there is not a reoccurrence of the allegation. It may be that further training is required for all or individual leaders. For example, a leader may be asked to apologise for losing their temper and shouting at a child.
- If the allegation is not substantiated then the person making the allegation and the person whom the allegation was made against should be informed in writing.

5. Has the volunteer/staff member been removed from regulated activity (either through instruction or their own violation) because they caused harm or pose a risk of harm to a child?

- The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Order (NI) 2007 (as amended by The Protection of Freedoms Act 2012) places a **legal** duty on organisations to refer unsuitable people to the Disclosure and Barring Service.
- This means that if a person is removed from working with children because they caused harm or posed a risk of harm, the Disclosure and Barring Service are to be contacted.
- This also applies if the person leaves voluntarily or retires from their position.
- If a person is removed from working with children because of a safeguarding issue then the Taking Care Office must be contacted.
- This concerns Northern Ireland only.

6. Do any amendments need to be made to the child protection policy or practices of the congregation or organisation in light of this allegation?

- Congregations are to review their child protection policy every three years. However, in light of an allegation or incident it is good practice to review the policy or practices particularly if an issue needs to be addressed immediately.
- For example, if there was an incident where a child sustained an injury while playing football in the youth club, it would be good to review football in youth club to ascertain if it should continue. Is there adequate supervision? Is the age/size range of the players suitable? Are the facilities safe? The conclusion may be reached that it is safe to continue or it might be that extra leaders are required or only five a side football should be played.