

Historical (non recent) Abuse Allegations

RELATED CHAPTERS

[Referrals to Children's Social Care Procedure](#)

[Complex \(Organised or Multiple\) Abuse Procedure](#)

AMENDMENT

In March 2018, [Section 3, Action to Safeguard](#) was updated to reflect that Adult Social Care should also be informed if the victim has needs for care and support now and it will have met a safeguarding threshold if the victim is currently experiencing, or is at risk of, abuse or neglect, and as a result of those needs is unable to protect himself or herself against the abuse or neglect or the risk of it. All practitioners involved in an allegation should ensure that support is offered, particularly with consideration to the Sexual Assault Referral Centre based in Leicester, which can take place even if the individual does not wish to pursue a criminal investigation.

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1. Introduction

Allegations of child abuse are sometimes made by adults and children many years after the abuse has occurred. There are many reasons for an allegation not being made at the time including fear of reprisals, the degree of control exercised by the abuser, shame or fear that the allegation may not be believed. Other triggers may include the person becoming aware that the abuser is being investigated for a similar matter or their suspicions that the abuse is continuing against other children.

These cases may be complex as the alleged victims may no longer be living in the situations where the incidents occurred or where the alleged perpetrators are no longer linked to the setting or employment role. Such cases should be responded to in the same way as any other concerns. For further information, please see [Referrals Procedure](#). It is important to consider forensic evidence which can still be recovered decades later from certain scenes and other sources such as photographs and electronic storage.

Ascertain as a matter of urgency if the alleged perpetrator is still working with, or caring for children. Children's Social Care in the area where the alleged incident took place has case responsibility and should arrange a [Strategy Discussion](#) to determine any further action required. The Strategy Discussion should involve senior

Police officers and agency managers to ensure there are appropriate resources. For further information please see [Strategy Discussions Procedure](#).

Where the perpetrator is a family member or acquaintance and it is not possible to identify current children at risk the worker should report the disclosure to the Police on 101.

2. Significance

Organisational responses to allegations by an adult of abuse experienced as a child must be of as high a standard as a response to current abuse because:

- There is a significant likelihood that a person who abused a child/ren in the past will have continued and may still be doing so;
- Other children may still be at risk;
- Criminal prosecutions may still take place despite the fact that the allegations are historical in nature and may have taken place many years ago.

An allegation may be made against (for example) a foster carer, adoptive parent, residential care staff, teacher, doctor, social worker, Police officer, volunteer or any other person who currently has, or previously had contact with children and young people. The alleged abuse may not have been an isolated incident. If it comes to light that the historical abuse is part of a wider setting of institutional or organised abuse, the case should be dealt with according to the procedures [Complex \(Organised or Multiple\) Abuse Procedure](#). See also [Allegations Against Persons who Work with Children Procedure](#). It is important to consider potential media interest in the case and appropriate steps should be taken to liaise with the media section in each relevant partner agency.

3. Action to Safeguard

As soon as it is apparent that an adult is revealing childhood abuse, the social worker or other agency professional must explain that relevant information will need to be shared with the Police in order to safeguard children. They must record what has been said by the service user, and the responses given by the worker. A [Chronology](#) should be undertaken and all records must be dated and the authorship made clear by a legible signature or name.

If possible, the social worker or agency professional should establish if the adult is aware of the current or recent whereabouts of the alleged perpetrator and whether or not they have had recent and/or current contact with children. Whilst an adult service user should be asked whether s/he wants a Police investigation it should be made clear that dependent upon the nature of the information provided the social worker may need to share this information with the Police if it will help to protect children. Adult service users must be reassured that the Leicestershire Police Safeguarding Team are able and willing to undertake such work even for those adults who are vulnerable as a result of mental health or learning difficulties.

Consideration must be given to the therapeutic needs of the adult and reassurance given that, even without her/his direct involvement all reasonable efforts will be made to look into what s/he has reported.

The social worker should:

- Inform the Police and establish if there is any knowledge regarding the alleged perpetrator's current contact with children;
- Inform their Team Manager, who should initiate a strategy discussion and consider other agencies as per Working Together to Safeguard Children if the threshold is met for a **Section 47 Enquiry** if the alleged perpetrator is believed to be currently caring for, or having access to children. This will include making the necessary referral to the area where the alleged perpetrator is known to live;
- A LADO referral will be made immediately if the adult works or works with children.

Agencies investigating the allegation(s) should consider the need for a referral to adult social care, in respect of the alleged perpetrator, if there are fears that the allegation(s) may trigger mental health needs, leading to the possibility of suicide or self-harm. Adult Social Care should also be informed if the victim has needs for care and support now and it will have met a safeguarding threshold if the victim is currently experiencing, or is at risk of, abuse or neglect, and as a result of those needs is unable to protect himself or herself against the abuse or neglect or the risk of it.

All practitioners involved in an allegation should ensure that support is offered, particularly with consideration to the **Sexual Assault Referral Centre** based in Leicester, which can take place even if the individual does not wish to pursue a criminal investigation.

Throughout the process consideration is needed for good liaison with other Local Authorities (LADOs; Duty teams; Police and relevant agencies/practitioners) where there are cross boundary issues.

Appendix 1: Flowchart for Responding to Disclosure of Historical Abuse

[Click here to view Appendix 1: Flowchart for Responding to Disclosure of Historical Abuse.](#)