1. **Procedures for Allegation Management**
These procedures should be applied when there is an allegation or concern that any person who works with children for or on behalf of Cedar Prime, in connection with their employment or voluntary activity, has:

• Behaved in a way that has harmed a child or may have harmed a child;
• Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child;
• Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children.

These bullet points reflect the statutory guidance in Working Together to Safeguard Children March 2015 para 4. Chapter 2, however ‘Keeping Children Safe in Education September 2016’ has a different wording in the third bullet.

These behaviours should be considered within the context of the 4 categories of abuse (i.e. physical, sexual and emotional abuse and neglect).

These include concerns relating to inappropriate relationships between members of staff and children or young people, for example:

Having a sexual relationship with a child under 18 if in a position of trust in respect of
that child, even if consensual (see ss16-19 Sexual Offences Act 2003);'Grooming', i.e. meeting a child under 16 with intent to commit a relevant offence (see
s15 Sexual Offences Act 2003);

Other 'grooming' behaviour giving rise to concerns of a broader child protection nature e.g. inappropriate text / e-mail messages or images, gifts, socialising etc; Possession of indecent photographs / pseudo-photographs of children.

All references in this document to 'members of staff' should be interpreted as meaning all paid or unpaid staff and volunteers. This chapter also applies to any person, who manages or facilitates access to an establishment where children are present.

If concerns arise about the person's behaviour to her/his own children, the police and/or children's social care must consider informing the employer / organisation in order to assess whether there may be implications for children with whom the person has contact at work / in the organisation, in which case this procedure will apply. Allegations of historical abuse should be responded to in the same way as contemporary concerns. In such cases, it is important to find out whether the person
against whom the allegation is made is still working with children and if so, to inform the person's current employer or voluntary organisation or refer their family for assessment.

Roles and responsibilities

Peter Webber is the named Senior Officer [Designated Officer] with overall responsibility for:
• Ensuring that Cedar Prime deals with allegations in accordance with the local Child Protection Procedures.
• Resolving any inter-agency issues.
• Liaising with the LSCB and Local Authority on the subject as needed.
Cedar Prime will keep records of contact details:
• Receive reports about allegations and to be involved in the management and oversight of individual cases;
• Provide advice and guidance to employers and voluntary organisations, and liaise with the police and other agencies;
• Monitor the progress of cases to ensure that they are dealt with as quickly as possible consistent with a thorough and fair process;
• Provide advice and guidance to employers in relation to making referrals to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) and regulatory bodies such as Ofsted, Social Work England etc.

• Peter Webber will support the police detective inspector on each child abuse investigation by:
• Having strategic oversight of the local police arrangements for managing allegations against staff and volunteers.
• Liaise with the LSCB on the issue.
• Ensure compliance with these procedures

1. **General considerations relating to allegations against staff or volunteers**

 **Persons to be notified**
Staff must inform the Designated Officer within 24 hours, when an allegation is made and prior to any further investigation taking place. The Designated Officer will link with other agencies, particularly the Police and Social Care and advise whether or not informing the parents at this stage and about how much information should be disclosed to the accused person.

Acting on this advice, if it is agreed that the information can be fully or partially
shared, the Designated Officer will inform the parent/s. In some circumstances, however, the parent/s may need to be told straight away (e.g. if a child is injured and requires medical treatment).
The parent/s and the child, if sufficiently mature, should be helped to understand the processes involved and be kept informed about the progress of the case and of the outcome where there is no criminal prosecution. This will include the outcome of any disciplinary process, but not the deliberations of, or the information used in, a hearing.

Subject to restrictions on the information that can be shared, the Designated Officer should, as soon as possible, inform the accused person about the nature of the allegation, how enquiries will be conducted and the possible outcome (e.g. disciplinary action, and dismissal or referral to the DBS or regulatory body).

The accused member of staff should:
• Be treated fairly and honestly and helped to understand the concerns expressed
and processes involved;
• Be kept informed of the progress and outcome of any investigation and the implications for any disciplinary or related process;
• If suspended, be kept up to date about events in the workplace. Ofsted should be informed of any allegation or concern made against a member of staff in any day care establishment for children under 8. They should also be invited to take part in any subsequent strategy meeting /discussion.

**Confidentiality**
Every effort should be made to maintain confidentiality and guard against publicity while an allegation is being investigated or considered. Apart from keeping the child, parents and accused person (where this would not place the child at further risk) up to date with progress of the case, information should be restricted to those who have a need to know in order to protect children, facilitate enquiries, manage related disciplinary or suitability processes.
The police should not provide identifying information to the press or media, unless and until a person is charged, except in exceptional circumstances (e.g. an appeal to trace a suspect). In such cases, the reasons should be documented and partner agencies consulted beforehand.
Parents and carers should be made aware of the requirement to maintain confidentiality about any allegations made against staff and volunteers whilst investigations are ongoing.

If parents or carers wish to apply to the court to have reporting restrictions removed, they should be advised to seek legal advice. The restrictions remain in place unless or until the accused is charged with a criminal offence, though they may be dispensed with on the application to the Magistrates' Court by any person, if the court is satisfied that it is in the interests of justice to do so, having regard to the welfare of:
• The person who is the subject of the allegation
• The victim of the offence to which the allegation relates
• There is a right of appeal to the Crown Court
The reporting restrictions also cease to apply if the individual to whom the restrictions apply effectively waives their right to anonymity by going public themselves or by giving their written consent for another to do so or if a judge lifts restrictions in response to a request to do so.

The legislation imposing restrictions makes clear that "publication" of material that may lead to the identification of the Officer who is the subject of the allegation is prohibited. "Publication" includes "any speech, writing, relevant programme or other communication in whatever form, which is addressed to the public at large or any section of the public". This means that a parent who, for example, published details of the allegation on a social networking site would be in breach of the reporting restrictions (if what was published could lead to the identification of the accused member of staff/volunteer by members of the public).

**Support**
Cedar Prime, together with LA children's social care and / or police, where they are involved, should consider the impact on the child concerned and provide support as appropriate.
Liaison between the agencies should take place in order to ensure that the child's needs are addressed.
As soon as possible after an allegation has been received, the accused member of staff should be advised to contact their union or professional association.
The Designated Officer will ensure that appropriate support can be provided via the organisation's occupational health or employee welfare arrangements.

**Suspension**
Suspension is a neutral act and it should not be automatic. It should be considered
in any case where:
• There is cause to suspect a child has suffered, or is likely to suffer significant
harm
• The allegation warrants investigation by the police
• The allegation is so serious that it might be grounds for dismissal
The possible risk of harm to children should be evaluated and managed in respect of the child/ren involved and any other children in the accused member of staff's home, work or community life.
If a strategy meeting / discussion is to be held or if LA children's social care or the police are to make enquiries, the Designated Officer should canvass their views on suspension prior to making a decision.

If a suspended person is to return to work, the Designated Officer will consider what help and support might be appropriate (e.g. a phased return to work and/or provision of a mentor), and also how best to manage the member of staff's contact with the child concerned, if still in the workplace.

**Resignations and 'compromise agreements'**
Every effort should be made to reach a conclusion in all cases even if:
The individual refuses to cooperate, having been given a full opportunity to answer the allegation and make representations;
It may not be possible to apply any disciplinary sanctions if a person's period of notice expires before the process is complete.
Compromise agreements' must not be used (i.e. where a member of staff agrees to resign provided that disciplinary action is not taken and that a future reference is agreed).

**Organised and historical abuse**

Cedar Prime, together with LA children's social care and / or police, where they are involved, should be alert to signs of organised or widespread abuse and/or the involvement of other perpetrators or institutions. They should consider whether the matter should be dealt with in accordance with complex abuse procedures which, if applicable, will take priority.

Historical allegations should be responded to in the same way as contemporary concerns. It will be important to ascertain if the person is currently working with children and if that is the case, to consider whether the current employer should be informed.

**Whistle-blowing**

All staff and volunteers should be made aware of the organisation's whistle-blowing policy and feel confident to voice concerns about the attitude or actions of colleagues.

If a member of staff believes that a reported allegation or concern is not being dealt with appropriately by Cedar Prime, they should report the matter to the Local Authority or other Agency involved with the child and follow Local Safeguarding Children Boards Procedure.

**Timescales**

It is in everyone's interest for cases to be dealt with expeditiously, fairly and thoroughly and for unnecessary delays to be avoided.
3. Initial response to an allegation or concern
An allegation against a member of staff may arise from a number of sources e.g. a report from a child, a concern raised by another adult in the organisation, or a
complaint by a parent. It may also arise in the context of the member of staff and their life outside work or at home.

**Initial action by person receiving or identifying an allegation or concern**

The person to whom an allegation or concern is first reported should treat the matter seriously and keep an open mind.
They should not:
• Investigate or ask leading questions if seeking clarification;
• Make assumptions or offer alternative explanations;
• Promise confidentiality, but give assurance that the information will only be shared on a 'need to know' basis.
They should:
• Make a written record of the information (where possible in the child / adult's own words), including the time, date and place of incident/s, persons present and what was said
• Sign and date the written record
• Immediately report the matter to the designated senior manager, or the deputy in their absence or
• Where the designated senior manager is the subject of the allegation report to the deputy or other appropriate senior manager.

**Initial action by the designated senior manager**When informed of a concern or allegation, the designated senior manager should not
investigate the matter or interview the member of staff, child concerned or potential
witnesses.
They should:
• Obtain written details of the concern / allegation, signed and dated by the
person receiving (not the child / adult making the allegation);
• Approve and date the written details;
• Record any information about times, dates and location of incident/s and names
of any potential witnesses;
• Record discussions about the child and/or member of staff, any decisions made,
and the reasons for those decisions.
Referrals should not be delayed in order to gather information and a failure to report an allegation or concern in accordance with procedures is a potential disciplinary matter.
If an allegation requires immediate attention, but is received outside normal office hours, the designated senior manager should consult the LA children's social care emergency duty team or local police and inform the Designated Officer as soon as possible.

If a police officer receives an allegation, they should, without delay, report it to the designated detective sergeant on the child abuse investigation team (CAIT). The detective sergeant should then immediately inform the Designated Officer. Similarly an allegation made to LA children's social care should be immediately reported to the Designated Officer.

There are up to three strands in the consideration of an allegation:
• A police investigation of a possible criminal offence;
• LA Children's social care enquiries and/or assessment about whether a child is in need of protection or services;
• Consideration by an employer of disciplinary action in relation to possible performance/conduct issues.
The Designated Officer will consider first whether further details are needed and whether there is evidence or information that establishes that the allegation is false or unfounded. Care should be taken to ensure that the child is not confused as to dates, times, locations or identity of the member of staff.
If the allegation is not demonstrably false and there is cause to suspect that a child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm, the Designated Officer should convene an immediate strategy meeting / discussion.
The police must be consulted about any case in which a criminal offence may have been committed. If the threshold for significant harm is not reached, but a police investigation might be needed, the Designated Officer should immediately inform the police and convene an initial evaluation meeting (similar to strategy meeting / discussion), to include the police, employer and other agencies involved with the child.
References in this document to 'strategy meetings / discussions' should be read to include 'Initial evaluation meetings' where appropriate.

**Strategy meeting / discussion**
Wherever possible, a strategy meeting / discussion / initial evaluation should take the form of a meeting. However, on occasions a telephone discussion may be justified.
The following is a list of possible participants:
• The Designated Officer/Senior Manager
• Designated Officer (D.O.) to chair (if a strategy meeting)
• Relevant social worker and their manager
• Detective sergeant

• The Designated and/or named Safeguarding Children Health Professional
(CCG);
• Consultant paediatrician
• Legal adviser where appropriate

Any other parties deemed appropriate.

The strategy meeting / discussion / initial evaluation should:
• Decide whether there should be a s47 enquiry and / or police investigation and consider the implications;
• Consider whether any parallel disciplinary process can take place and agree
protocols for sharing information;
• Consider the current allegation in the context of any previous allegations or
concerns;
• Plan enquiries if needed, allocate tasks and set timescales;
• Decide what information can be shared, with whom and when.
The strategy meeting / discussion / initial evaluation should also:
• Ensure that arrangements are made to protect the child/ren involved and any other child/ren affected, including taking emergency action where needed;
• Consider what support should be provided to all children who may be affected;
• Consider what support should be provided to the member of staff and others who may be affected and how they will be kept up to date with the progress of the investigation;
• Ensure that investigations are sufficiently independent;
• Make recommendations where appropriate regarding suspension, or alternatives to suspension;
• Identify a lead contact manager within each agency;
• Agree protocols for reviewing investigations and monitoring progress by the Designated Officer, having regard to the target times scales.

Cedar Prime Allegations Management Procedure.

November 2023