Allegations of Abuse Against Staff Policy

Policy Information

Responsible Person	**Wayne Stewart**
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1. INTRODUCTION

We are under a duty to promote and safeguard the welfare of children at New Roots Workshop and to have regard to guidance issued by the Government. New Roots Workshop accepts the guidance set out in the following documents:

- Working Together 2023.
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026.

New Roots Workshop also has a duty of care to our employees and volunteers. It is essential that any allegation of abuse made against a mentor or other member of staff or volunteer at New Roots Workshop is dealt with very quickly, in a fair and consistent way that provides effective protection for the young person and at the same time supports the person who is the subject of the allegation. The procedures outlined in this policy will be followed alongside New Roots Workshop's complaints procedure statement and safeguarding policy. This policy and procedure will be used in respect of all cases in which it is alleged that a mentor or member of staff (including a volunteer) has:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed or may have harmed a young person;
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a young person; or,
- Behaved towards a young person in a way that indicates s/he poses a risk of harm to young people.
- Behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with young people; this is known as transferable risk.

All members of staff at New Roots Workshop will be made aware of this policy during induction.

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2. HOW CONCERNS ARISE

Concerns about the possible abuse of Young People by staff will usually arise in one of two ways, either:

- A direct allegation by a young person or a third party, for example a parent.
- An observation by a member of staff that the behaviour of a colleague is inappropriate or potentially or actually abusive.

In any case the concern must be reported to the Director, Wayne Stewart as the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), immediately unless the allegations are against the Director in which case the allegation should be reported to Alan Tozer, Director. As this is a statutory duty we expect all members of staff in the school, where they have concerns, to report them in accordance with this policy.

Low level concerns do not reach the harm threshold but are considered within this policy. According to KCSiE (2026) low level concerns could include behaviour inconsistent with the staff code of conduct, including inappropriate conduct outside of work and does not meet the harm threshold or is otherwise not serious enough to consider a referral to the LADO. Examples of such behaviour could include, but are not limited to:

- Being over friendly with young people
- Having favourites
- Taking photographs of young people on their mobile phone, contrary to policy
- Engaging with a young person on a one-to-one basis in a secluded area or behind a closed door, or
- Humiliating young people

Low-level concerns may arise in several ways and from several sources. For example: suspicion; complaint; or disclosure made by a young person, parent or other adult within or outside of the organisation; or because of vetting checks undertaken. New Roots Workshop ensures that all low-level concerns are shared with the designated safeguarding lead and recorded and dealt with appropriately.

3. INITIAL ACTION

New Roots Workshop will ensure it has a full understanding of what is being alleged from the person reporting the allegation; and will only speak to the

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Young Person if it is unavoidable or if it is the Young Person making the allegation. New Roots Workshop will establish that:

- An allegation has been made.
- The general nature of the allegation.
- When and where the incident is alleged to have occurred.
- Who was involved.
- Any other persons present.

The procedures for dealing with allegations will be applied with common sense and judgement. Many cases may well either not meet the criteria set out above in Section 1 or may do so without warranting consideration of either a police investigation or enquiries by local authority children's social care services. In these cases, local arrangements will be followed to resolve cases without delay.

Some cases will require immediate intervention by the children's social care services and/or police. The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) will be informed of all allegations that come to the Directors attention and appear to meet the criteria so they can consult with policy and children's social care services as appropriate.

The following definitions will be used when determining the outcome of allegation investigations:

- Substantiated: there is sufficient evidence to prove the allegation
- Malicious: there is sufficient evidence to disprove the allegation and there has been a deliberate act to deceive
- False: there is sufficient evidence to disprove the allegation
- Unsubstantiated: there is insufficient evidence to either to prove or disprove the allegation. The term, therefore, does not imply guilt or innocence. The burden of proof will be "on the balance of probabilities".

4. CONSULTATION AND REFERRAL

If the allegation meets any of the criteria set out under Section 1, the Directors must discuss the allegation with the LADO, to consider the nature, content and context of the allegations and agree a course of action. This may include:

- Involving the police.
- Involving social care services.
- The making of further enquiries (and establishing by whom these will be made).

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- The process of informing the parents if they are not already aware of the allegation.
- The informing of the accused person and what information may be disclosed.
- Any recommendation to suspend a member of staff.

The initial sharing of information and evaluation may lead to a decision that no further action will be taken regarding the individual facing the allegation or concern. In this case New Roots Workshop and the LADO will keep appropriate records of this decision and agree upon what action will follow in respect of the individual and those who made the initial allegation. If it is unclear whether the threshold has been reached one of the Directors can consult the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) Team before a formal referral is made.

5. STRATEGY MEETING

Following the referral to the LADO a strategy meeting may be convened in accordance with the 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' guidance. There may be up to 3 strands in the consideration of an allegation:

- A police investigation of a possible criminal offence
- Enquiries and assessment by children's social care about whether a child needs protection or in need of services.
- Consideration by New Roots Workshop of disciplinary action in respect of the individual. One of the Directors will attend any strategy meeting on behalf of the school and support the actions arising from that meeting.

6. SUPPORTING THOSE INVOLVED

New Roots Workshop have a duty of care to their employees.

- It will act to manage and minimise the stress inherent in the allegations process. Support for the individual concerned is vital to fulfilling this duty.
- Individuals will be informed of concerns or allegations as soon as possible and explained the likely course of action, unless there is an objection by the children's social care services or the police.
- One of the Directors will appoint a named representative to keep the person who is the subject of the allegation informed of the progress of the case and consider what other support is appropriate for the individual.
- Care will be taken when employees are suspended to ensure that they are kept informed of both the progress of their case and current work-related issues.

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- Social contact with colleagues and friends will not be prevented unless there is evidence to suggest that such contact is likely to be prejudicial to the gathering and presentation of evidence.
- Parents or carers of a Young Person or young people involved will be told about the allegation as soon as possible if they do not already know of it. However, where a strategy discussion is required, or police or children's social care services need to be involved, New Roots Workshop will not do so until those agencies have been consulted and have agreed what information can be disclosed to the parents or carers.
- Parents or carers will also be kept informed about the progress of the case; and told the outcome where there is not a criminal prosecution, including the outcome of any disciplinary process.
- The deliberations of a disciplinary hearing, and the information considered in reaching a decision, cannot normally be disclosed, but the parents or carers of the child will be told the outcome in confidence.
- If parents or carers wish to apply to the court to have reporting restrictions removed, they will be told to seek legal advice.
- In cases where a Young Person may have suffered significant harm, or there may be a criminal prosecution, the allegations management meeting will consider what support the young person or young people involved may need.

7. SUSPENSION

The possible risk of harm to young persons posed by an accused person will be evaluated and managed in respect of the Young Person(s) involved in the allegation, and any other young persons in the accused individual's home, work or community life. Suspension will be considered in any case where:

- There is a cause to suspect a Young Person, or young people are at risk of harm.
- The allegation warrants formal investigation by the police.
- There is a likelihood that evidence may be tampered with, or witnesses intimidated.
- The allegation is so serious that it might be grounds for dismissal.

New Roots Workshop will consider carefully whether the circumstance of a case warrants a person being suspended from contact with the young people until the allegation is resolved. In deciding whether to suspend a member of staff, the school will consider advice given by the LADO, HR adviser or at a strategy meeting and any risk assessment considering alternatives to suspension.

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New Roots Workshop will also consider the potential permanent professional reputational damage to employees that can result from suspension where an allegation is later found to be unsubstantiated or maliciously intended. If immediate suspension is considered necessary, the rationale and justification will be agreed and recorded by both New Roots Workshop and the LADO. This will also include what alternatives have been considered and why they were rejected.

Written confirmation of the suspension will be dispatched within one working day, giving as much detail as appropriate for the reasons of the suspension. Any suspension is done as a neutral act, and no inference of guilt is attached to such a decision.

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