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| Investigating Historical Allegations of Child Abuse; Policy Guidance 2022 |
| Version control 1 |

**Historical Allegation of Child Abuse - Definition:**

The term historical abuse refers to any allegations of child abuse and/or harm, that occurred when the victim was a child, and which have been made when the victim is an adult.

**Introduction:**

It is important to recognise that allegations of child abuse are sometimes made by adults and children many years after the abuse has occurred. There is no time limit as to when a complaint of this nature can be made. There are many reasons why an allegation was not made at the time it happened, such as fear of reprisals, the degree of control exercised by the abuser, shame or fear that the allegation may not be believed.

There are various ways in which historical abuse can come to light e.g. a complaint to Children’s Services or via a solicitors' letter regarding a compensation claim; the individual may become aware that the abuser is being investigated for a similar matter or; the victim has a suspicion that the abuse is continuing against other children. Where there are parallel processes in progress the historical abuse procedure should still be followed.

Historical abuse allegations may be complex as the victim may no longer be living in the situation where the incident(s) occurred, or the alleged perpetrator may no longer be linked to the setting or employment role. These cases should be responded to in the same way as any other concerns. It is always important to ascertain as a matter of urgency, if the alleged perpetrator is still working with or caring for children.

Important to consider that an allegation may be made against (for example) a foster carer, adoptive parent, residential care staff, teacher, doctor, police officer, volunteer or any other person who currently has, or previously had contact with children and young people. The alleged abuse/harm 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 matter should be dealt with according to the Organised and Complex Abuse Guidance [Chapter 8, London Child Protection Procedures].

These allegations must also be reported to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) for the area in which the alleged abuse took place / where the professional worked, and the LADO procedures must be followed.

**Significance for Practice:**

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;
* Criminal prosecution remains a possibility if sufficient evidence can be carefully collated.
* Any potential victims should have the opportunity to have their lived experience heard.

**Initial Response:**

As soon as it is apparent that an adult is revealing childhood abuse, the member of staff must record what is said by the service user and the responses given by the staff member [NB: it is important to simply record what is said and not to ask any leading questions]. The professional must record what has been said by the individual and the responses given to them. This should then be recorded on the Historical Abuse Police Referral Form with a copy sent to the Police.

It is essential that a chronology is completed with all relevant records explored and must be dated and the authorship made clear by a legible signature or name.

If possible or appropriate, staff should establish if the adult is aware of the alleged perpetrator's recent or current whereabouts and contact with children.

**Professionals responding to an allegation of historical abuse should try and establish the following:**

* Name of the alleged abuser, date of birth or approximate current age and current address/whereabouts and occupation/ role in relation to the child at the time of the alleged abuse.
* Location/address where the abuse occurred
* The year [including timespan if possible] that the abuse occurred and duration of the period over which the abuse occurred
* Whether it is known if there are any child(ren) that may currently be at risk from the alleged abuser or any contact the alleged abuser has with children both now and historically.
* Inform the police [via the Historical Abuse Police Referral Form] and establish whether there is any knowledge regarding the alleged perpetrator’s currently contact with children.
* Consideration given to whether a strategy discussion/meeting is required
* Advice should be sought from a senior manager regarding next steps.

**Additional considerations:**

* The professional should be aware and sensitive to the fact that the adult disclosing may not wish to give any of the above details, including the alleged abusers' name, possibly in fear for their own safety or beca\use of the response or impact on family/riends.
* Direct questioning concerning the detail of the abuse should be avoided, but an adult disclosing abuse should not be prevented from freely recalling events.
* If a child under 18 makes a disclosure to a professional about historical abuse this should be responded to like any other disclosure of abuse (i.e. contact Haringey MASH).

**Victim Support:**

An adult service user should be asked whether they want and/or feel able to participate in a police investigation and must be reassured that the Police Safeguarding Investigations Unit is 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 their direct involvement, all reasonable efforts will be made to investigate what they have reported.

The adult should be informed that when it is believed that an alleged abuser has contact with a child or poses a risk to children a referral will be made to children’s social care so that information can be gathered, and a decision can be made whether to apply child protection procedures in respect of the child(ren) with whom the alleged abuser has contact or who may be at risk of harm.

It Is important to note that individuals making allegations of historical abuse may have carried their traumatic experiences with them for a significant number of years. Signposting them to support services is essential.

Consideration should be given to any risks posed to a vulnerable adult and, if necessary, a referral made to the adult safeguarding services.

There are a number of local, regional and national support groups and charities that should be explored, such as Victim Support.

**Need to Know for consideration:**

If the allegation implicates the LA in not taking action to protect; then the Head of Service for the Engagement, Safeguarding and Quality Assurance, (ESQA) Service should be notified and a Need to Know notification sent to the Assistant Director for Safeguarding.

The Head of Service in consultation with the Assistant Director will consider:

1. Submitting a partnership notification to the Haringey Safeguarding Children’s Partnership, (HSCP),  for a Rapid Response threshold and risk assessment discussion
2. Appointing an independent person to work with the police and the adult making the allegation. This should be carefully considered even if the police investigation does not progress.

**Allegations against Adults who work or have worked with children:**

If an adult makes reports an allegation about an individual who has previously or currently works with children, a referral must be made to the Local Authority Designated Officer, known as the LADO.

**LADO response:**

* Complete checks to establish if the alleged perpetrator is currently working with children and/or young people.
* Check the LADO database for any intelligence that may indicate previous concerns that may have be recorded.
* The LADO will check Children’s Services electronic database records for the alleged perpetrator/victim or connected persons.
* Inform the Police of the allegation
* Provide advice to the professional supporting the adult who has made the allegation. The advice will include the requirement for LADO to inform the Police and that it will be the individual’s decision regarding whether they wish to support a criminal investigation.
* The LADO will provide advice regarding support options for the victim.
* If the alleged perpetrator is currently working within a Children’s Workforce role, the LADO will, in consultation with police, take steps to inform their relevant employer.
* If known that the individual has moved to work or reside in another local authority area, the LADO will contact their respective LADO in that area to share information regarding the person and the allegation.
* Efforts will be made to establish if the alleged perpetrator has current contact with children and if so, a referral will be made to the relevant children’s services department.
* LADO will consider with police and senior management whether the allegation meets the criteria of complex, organised abuse.
* LADO will arrange an ASV meeting where it is established that the alleged perpetrator is/was a professional working with children to review the progress of the investigation by the police and to consider wider potential contextual risk of harm.

**Police criminal investigation:**

If an adult makes known that they wish to support a criminal investigation, it will be a Police led investigation under the ‘Guidance in relation to Managing Allegations against Staff, Carer’s and Volunteers. As a minimum the following should happen and/or be taken into consideration:

* The BCU Police Unit via CAIU must be informed about the allegations of historical abuse at the earliest opportunity.
* The Historical Child Abuse Police Referral form must be completed and sent to the police within 24 hours of the allegation being made/documented.
* Whether the Police become involved in an investigation will depend on several factors including the victims wishes, the safeguarding needs of others and the public interest.
* If the location of the crim is not in Haringey, then the local Haringey Police will inform the local relevant Police force area.
* The victim will be told who will continue with the investigation.

**Children’s Services should:**

* Initiate a Section 47 enquiry if the alleged perpetrator is currently caring for or has access to children (including making the necessary referral to the area where the alleged perpetrator is now known to live).
* Where the alleged perpetrator has contact with children as part of his or her employment, or as a volunteer, the LADO should be formally notified to ensure the Allegations Against People who work with, Care for or Volunteer with Children Procedure is followed.

**If the adult decides not to support a criminal investigation at this stage, the LADO will:**

* Expect the establishment (if still in operation) to undertake an internal review of information held. This would confirm their employment records, whether any concerns were raised about the member of staff during the period of their employment.
* Confirm via their internal review that their current policies and procedures are in line with statutory guidance and identify learning points that will confirm the situation relating to the allegation could be prevented now.