

Safer Working Practices

Briefing Note for Voluntary Sector Agencies (26.1.07)

Context

Safer Working Practices is a term which summarises the processes that agencies should have in place in order to prevent unsuitable people from working with children. Whilst agencies have been aware of the need to have such processes in place for some time the important and relevance of such processes was re-emphasised in the Bichard Report into the Soham murders.

Safer Working Practices consist of two main work areas:

- Safer Recruitment/Vetting Procedures
- Procedures for Managing allegations against people that work with children, including volunteers and foster carers.

Other related work areas include Whistle blowing processes, processes for managing information in relation to staff/volunteers and induction/training.

Statutory/Policy Framework

Requirements in relation to Safer Working Practice are highlighted in

- Statutory Guidance on making arrangements to Safeguard and Promote the welfare of children under Section 11 of The Children Act 2004
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2006 (in particular Appendix 5.)
- Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment in Education

The requirements of this Statutory Guidance have informed work to revise local Child Protection Procedures. These can be accessed by the County Council Website at

Via www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/nscb

Detailed guidance is included in Chapter 7 of the child protection procedures in relation to managing allegations/concerns against people that work with children.

Guidance in relation to safer recruitment, and the other aspects of safer working referred to above, is currently in the process of being produced. There has been Voluntary Sector input into devising this guidance. At the point the guidance has been finalised and a briefing for staff from across all agencies, including the Voluntary Sector, will be held.

What's New in Relation to Managing Allegations/Concerns

1. Agencies are required to have in place robust mechanisms for responding to any such concerns.

2. The threshold for relevant concerns differs to the threshold that would apply to Child Protection concerns. The Criteria apply to concerns that indicate an individual may have
 - Behaved in a way that has harmed, or may have harmed, a child
 - Possibly committed a criminal offence against, or related to, a child
 - Behaved in a way that indicates that they are unsuitable to work with children
3. The Local Authority is required to designate an officer who will oversee the timescales within which enquiries into all elements of relevant concerns are completed. All enquiries will have up to three potential related enquiries. These are:
 - Disciplinary/Competence Enquiries
 - Enquiries by Children's Social Care
 - Police enquiries
4. The Local Authority Designated Officer is also responsible for providing advice and guidance to agencies in this area of practice
5. Timescales are the proposed mechanisms by which Safeguarding Board should measure the effectiveness of local procedures.
6. Safeguarding Boards are required to report back to the DFES. The timescales within which enquiries are completed. This report is also required to identify the nature of the allegations under consideration and the range of agencies involved.
7. Agencies are required to have in place named Managers to whom allegations about staff/volunteers within their agency are reported. This would apply to all agencies, including non-statutory agencies. There also needs to be a deputy/alternative reporting point in case the concern relates to the named manager or the named manager is not present.