

ANNEX A

GUIDELINES FOR STAFF ON HOW TO RESPOND TO ALLEGATIONS OR SUSPICIONS OF CHILD ABUSE OR HARM

1. Child abuse includes acts of both omission and commission that have caused, or are likely to cause, harm to the child. There are different forms of abuse and they include neglect, physical abuse and non-accidental injury, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, exploitation and fabricated or induced illness by a parent of or person responsible for a child (including persons in a position of trust).¹
2. Child abuse can also include exposure to extremist ideology (see para 4), forced marriage and female genital mutilation.
3. Harm means ill-treatment or impairment of a child's health or development including, for example, impairment suffered from seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. 'Development' means physical, intellectual, emotional, social or behavioural development. 'Health' means physical or mental health; and 'ill-treatment' includes sexual abuse and forms of ill-treatment which are not physical.²
4. The Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015 places a duty on universities to have '*due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism*' ('the Prevent duty'). Concerns that a child, or vulnerable adult, has been, or may be exposed to inappropriate/ extremist material or activities should be acted upon in accordance with the appropriate procedure below. Where a Prevent-related concern is established, the College's *Referral of Concerns Policy and Procedure* (<http://www.imperial.ac.uk/admin-services/secretariat/secretariat/what-we-do/prevent/referral-of-concerns/>) should be followed.
5. For the purposes of this section the word "abuse" includes reference to harm and the word "harm" includes reference to abuse.
6. These procedures provide step-by-step guidance on how to respond to a concern about a child's welfare. It is the duty of any staff working with children to report disclosures of abuse to their Local Safeguarding Officer or a Lead Safeguarding Officer (Annex H). It is not for staff to decide whether or not a suspicion or allegation is true. All suspicions or allegations must be taken seriously and dealt with according to this Policy and Code of Practice. Investigation of and action taken in relation to any alleged malpractice or wrongdoing will be undertaken in line with Ordinance 18 – Investigation of Public Interest Disclosures.
7. Concerns may arise because:
 - a. A child alleges abuse;
 - b. Someone else discloses that a child has alleged abuse to him/ her or that s/he strongly believes a child has been or is being abused;
 - c. There are suspicions or indicators that a child is being abused;

1. "Position of trust" is defined under sections 16-24 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003.

2. Section 31 of the Children Act 1989 as amended by the Adoption and Children Act 2002.

d. There are observable changes in a child's behaviour that may be related to abuse; and/or

e. The behaviour of a member of staff towards children causes concern or there is suspicion that a member of staff is abusing a child.

Further advice is available from the government's [What to do if you're worried a child is being abused](#) guidance.

8. The basic premise of a child protection procedure is to ensure that children who are suffering from harm, abuse and neglect are identified, and that information is shared appropriately to afford them protection and ensure access to requisite services.

HOW TO RESPOND IF A CHILD DISCLOSES ABUSE

9. If a child alleges abuse, staff should:

a. Stay calm, listen and re-assure the child;

b. Limit any questioning to the minimum necessary to seek clarification only and avoid leading questions;

c. Check with the child that they have their consent to share the information. If consent is withheld then be clear to the child why their wishes may need to be overridden. Do not promise confidentiality;

d. Record information, using the child's own words if possible, and ask the child whether what has been recorded accords with what they have said;

e. Discuss with the child any steps which could be taken immediately to protect them from harm, and what the child will do after the discussion;

f. Invite the child to be party to any discussion with a safeguarding officer

g. Make a report to a safeguarding officer (Annex H);

h. One of the Child Protection Officers should decide upon next steps: seeking further advice, informing parents, informing children's social care, informing the DBS and/ or the Police;

i. Advise the child what is going to happen and seek their consent wherever possible; and

j. Advise the child of the outcome of any conversations with outside agencies and what will happen next.

HOW TO RESPOND IF THERE ARE SUSPICIONS A STAFF MEMBER IS ABUSING A CHILD

11. If there are genuine suspicions that a staff member is abusing a child, staff should:
 - a. Maintain confidentiality but alert one of the Child Protection Officers in the first instance.
 - b. The Child Protection Officer should take such steps as s/he considers necessary to ensure the safety of the child in question and any other child who might be at risk. The Child Protection Officer should speak to the child about any actions taken and offer support and advice about what will happen next.
 - c. The Child Protection Officer shall keep the person who reported the original concern informed of how the matter is progressing to the extent that this is appropriate.

RECORDING INFORMATION

12. The member of staff who raises the initial concern must record what they have observed or what the child disclosed, and speak with a Safeguarding Officer about the case as soon as reasonably possible.
13. The Safeguarding Officer should record any subsequent actions, decisions or conversations.
14. A Child Protection Officer is responsible for forwarding referrals to the Disclosure and Barring Service.
15. Safeguarding Officers are responsible for storing information in a secure area and ensuring that only authorised staff have access to this.