

Managing Allegations Against Staff and Volunteers Policy

Purpose

PMACTIVE is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children, young people and adults at risk who access our services. PMACTIVE recognises that allegations or concerns may occasionally be raised about the behaviour, conduct or actions of a member of staff, volunteer, sessional worker, coach, mentor, contractor or other person working on behalf of PMACTIVE.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that allegations are taken seriously, responded to promptly and managed fairly, consistently and in accordance with safeguarding procedures. The safety and welfare of the child, young person or adult at risk will always be the primary consideration. This policy also recognises the importance of ensuring that staff and volunteers who are the subject of an allegation are treated fairly and supported appropriately throughout the process.

Scope

This policy applies to:

- Employees.
- Sessional staff.
- Coaches and mentors.
- Volunteers.
- Students and placement workers.
- Contractors or self-employed workers working on behalf of PMACTIVE.
- Any other person working with or representing PMACTIVE.

It applies to allegations relating to children, young people and adults at risk.

What is an Allegation?

An allegation may arise where there is a concern that a member of staff or volunteer has:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed, or may have harmed, a child, young person or adult at risk.
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against, or related to, a child, young person or adult at risk.
- Behaved towards a child, young person or adult at risk in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm.
- Breached safeguarding expectations or professional boundaries.
- Used inappropriate, abusive, threatening, discriminatory or sexualised behaviour.
- Used inappropriate physical contact or physical intervention.
- Failed to follow safeguarding procedures in a way that places someone at risk.

- Engaged in inappropriate online communication or contact.
- Misused personal information, photographs, videos or social media.
- Behaved in a way that may undermine the trust or confidence placed in them to work safely with children, young people or adults at risk.

An allegation does not mean that the person is guilty of wrongdoing. All allegations will be considered fairly and investigated appropriately.

How Concerns May Arise

An allegation or concern may be raised by:

- A child or young person.
- An adult at risk.
- A parent or carer.
- A staff member.
- A volunteer.
- Another professional.
- A partner organisation.
- A member of the public.
- Another person who has witnessed or become aware of concerning behaviour.

Concerns may also arise through observations, incident reports, complaints, safeguarding disclosures, online activity or information received from another organisation.

Immediate Safeguarding Action

Where a concern or allegation is received, the immediate safety and welfare of the child, young person or adult at risk must be considered.

Staff and volunteers must:

- Take the concern seriously.
- Listen calmly and appropriately.
- Avoid leading questions or attempting to investigate the allegation themselves.
- Record relevant information as soon as possible.
- Report the concern immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or appropriate member of PMActive Management.
- Take immediate action to protect anyone who may be at risk.

Where there is an immediate risk of serious harm, emergency services should be contacted. The person receiving an allegation must not promise confidentiality. They should explain that information may need to be shared with people who need to act to protect someone from harm.

Reporting to the Designated Safeguarding Lead

All allegations against staff and volunteers must be reported to the DSL without delay.

The DSL will consider the information and determine the appropriate safeguarding response.

Where the allegation relates to the DSL, the concern must not be dealt with by the DSL. It should be referred to another appropriate member of PMActive Management and, where necessary, the relevant external safeguarding authority.

Allegations About the Management Team

PMActive recognises that an allegation may involve a manager or senior member of staff.

Where an allegation involves PMActive Management, the matter will be referred to an appropriate alternative senior person who is not involved in the allegation.

Where necessary, PMActive will seek advice from the relevant Local Authority safeguarding service, Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), police or other appropriate authority.

No person should be responsible for managing an allegation where they have a conflict of interest.

Allegations Requiring External Safeguarding Advice

PMActive will seek appropriate external safeguarding advice where an allegation may meet the threshold for referral.

Depending on the circumstances, this may include contacting:

- The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).
- Children's social care.
- Adult safeguarding services.
- The police.
- The relevant Local Safeguarding Children Partnership.
- Other appropriate safeguarding or regulatory bodies.

PMActive will follow the relevant local safeguarding procedures and statutory guidance applicable to the circumstances. Where there is uncertainty about whether an allegation meets the threshold for referral, PMActive will seek advice rather than dismissing the concern.

Confidentiality

Allegations will be handled sensitively and confidentially. Information will only be shared with those who need to know in order to safeguard individuals, manage the allegation, obtain advice or fulfil legal or organisational responsibilities.

Staff and volunteers must not discuss allegations with colleagues, children, families or other individuals unless specifically authorised to do so. Confidentiality must not prevent appropriate safeguarding information from being shared where necessary to protect a child, young person or adult at risk.

Preserving Evidence

Where an allegation may involve evidence such as messages, photographs, videos, emails, social media content or other digital information, staff must not delete, alter or interfere with potential evidence. Information should be preserved and reported to management or the appropriate safeguarding authority.

Staff and volunteers should not attempt to access another person's private accounts or devices as part of an investigation unless specifically authorised by the appropriate authority.

Initial Assessment

PMAActive Management will consider:

- The nature of the allegation.
- The immediate safeguarding risk.
- The age and circumstances of anyone affected.
- Whether other children, young people or adults may also be at risk.
- Whether external safeguarding advice or referral is required.
- Whether temporary changes to the individual's duties are necessary.
- Whether the matter may require disciplinary, employment or other organisational action.

The initial assessment will not determine guilt or innocence. Its purpose is to establish the appropriate safeguarding response.

Suspension or Temporary Changes to Duties

PMAActive recognises that suspension is not an automatic response to an allegation. Where appropriate, PMAActive may consider temporary changes to duties, increased supervision, removal from particular activities or suspension from duties while an allegation is being considered.

Any decision will take into account:

- The safeguarding risk.
- The nature and seriousness of the allegation.
- The individual's role.
- The potential risk to children, young people or adults at risk.
- Advice from relevant safeguarding or external authorities.
- The impact on any ongoing investigation.

Any employment-related action will be managed in accordance with relevant employment procedures. A staff member or volunteer will not be treated as having been found guilty simply because temporary measures have been put in place.

Supporting the Child, Young Person or Adult at Risk

PMAActive will ensure that the needs and wellbeing of anyone affected by an allegation remain a priority.

Support may include:

- Providing a safe person to speak with.
- Ensuring appropriate supervision.
- Making reasonable adjustments to activities.
- Working with parents or carers where appropriate.
- Referring to appropriate professional support.
- Working with other agencies where necessary.

Information will be shared with children, young people, adults at risk and families appropriately and sensitively, while respecting confidentiality and the requirements of any ongoing investigation.

Supporting the Staff Member or Volunteer

PMAActive recognises that being the subject of an allegation can be distressing and stressful.

Where appropriate, PMAActive will:

- Treat the individual fairly and respectfully.
- Explain the process where it is appropriate and lawful to do so.
- Provide an appropriate management contact.
- Provide access to supervision or welfare support.
- Maintain confidentiality.
- Ensure that the individual is not subject to unnecessary speculation or discussion.

Providing support to the person subject to an allegation does not affect PMAActive's responsibility to safeguard children, young people or adults at risk.

Staff and Volunteer Responsibilities

All staff and volunteers are responsible for:

- Maintaining appropriate professional boundaries.
- Following PMAActive's safeguarding policies and procedures.
- Reporting allegations or concerns immediately.
- Never ignoring or dismissing a safeguarding concern.
- Never attempting to conduct their own investigation.
- Preserving relevant information or evidence.
- Maintaining appropriate confidentiality.
- Cooperating with safeguarding enquiries or investigations.
- Reporting any further concerns that arise.

Staff and volunteers should never assume that someone else will report a concern.

Responsibility of the Designated Safeguarding Lead

The DSL is responsible for:

- Receiving and responding to safeguarding allegations.
- Ensuring concerns are recorded accurately.
- Assessing immediate safeguarding risks.
- Seeking appropriate external safeguarding advice.
- Making or supporting referrals where necessary.
- Ensuring relevant safeguarding procedures are followed.
- Maintaining appropriate confidentiality.
- Ensuring appropriate information is shared with those who need to know.
- Monitoring safeguarding actions and outcomes.
- Ensuring relevant learning is identified and implemented.

Where the DSL is the subject of an allegation, these responsibilities will be undertaken by an alternative appropriate senior person.

Allegations Made by Children or Young People

PMAActive recognises that children and young people may find it difficult to disclose concerns about someone they know, trust or depend upon. Staff must respond calmly and without judgement. Where a child or young person makes an allegation, staff should:

- Listen carefully.
- Allow them to speak in their own words.
- Avoid leading questions.
- Avoid expressing disbelief or making promises.
- Reassure them that they have done the right thing by speaking up.
- Explain that the information needs to be shared with the appropriate safeguarding person.
- Record the disclosure accurately.
- Report it immediately to the DSL.

Malicious or Deliberately False Allegations

PMAActive will always take allegations seriously and will not assume that an allegation is false because it appears difficult to substantiate. Where an investigation establishes that an allegation was deliberately fabricated or maliciously made, PMAActive may consider appropriate action. A concern that cannot be substantiated will not automatically be treated as malicious.

Disciplinary and Employment Procedures

Where appropriate, an allegation may also result in action under PMAActive's disciplinary or employment procedures. Safeguarding processes and employment processes may operate alongside one another, but safeguarding considerations will take priority where there is a risk of harm. PMAActive will ensure that any disciplinary or employment action is fair, proportionate and consistent with relevant employment requirements.

Referral and Disclosure Requirements

Where an individual is removed from regulated activity with children or adults at risk because they pose a risk of harm, PMAActive will consider whether a referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) or another relevant authority is required. Any such referral will be made in accordance with the applicable legal requirements and guidance. PMAActive will not knowingly allow an individual to continue regulated activity where doing so would place children, young people or adults at risk of harm.

Record Keeping

PMAActive will maintain secure records of allegations and the actions taken.

Records may include:

- Date and time the concern was received.
- Details of the allegation.

- Information provided by the person raising the concern.
- Immediate safeguarding actions taken.
- Advice sought.
- Referrals made.
- Decisions regarding duties or supervision.
- Investigation outcomes where appropriate.
- Actions and learning arising from the matter.

Records will be stored securely and handled in accordance with PMActive's Data Protection and Confidentiality Policy and relevant retention requirements.

Learning and Review

Following an allegation, PMActive will consider whether any changes are required to:

- Safeguarding procedures.
- Risk assessments.
- Staff or volunteer training.
- Supervision arrangements.
- Recruitment procedures.
- Professional boundaries.
- Management oversight.
- Policies and procedures.

Learning will be used to strengthen safeguarding practice and reduce the likelihood of similar concerns arising in the future.

Related Policies

This policy should be read alongside:

- Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy.
- Safeguarding Adults Policy.
- Safer Recruitment and Selection Policy.
- Whistleblowing Policy.
- Complaints and Compliments Policy.
- Staff and Volunteer Code of Conduct.
- Lone Working Policy.
- Positive Behaviour and Relationships Policy.
- Data Protection and Confidentiality Policy.

Review

This policy will be reviewed regularly and updated where necessary to reflect changes in legislation, statutory guidance, local safeguarding procedures or PMActive's organisational practice.

Policy Reviews:

Policy Written: April 2024

Reviewed: September 2025

Reviewed: June 2026