



## **Managing allegations in residential care**

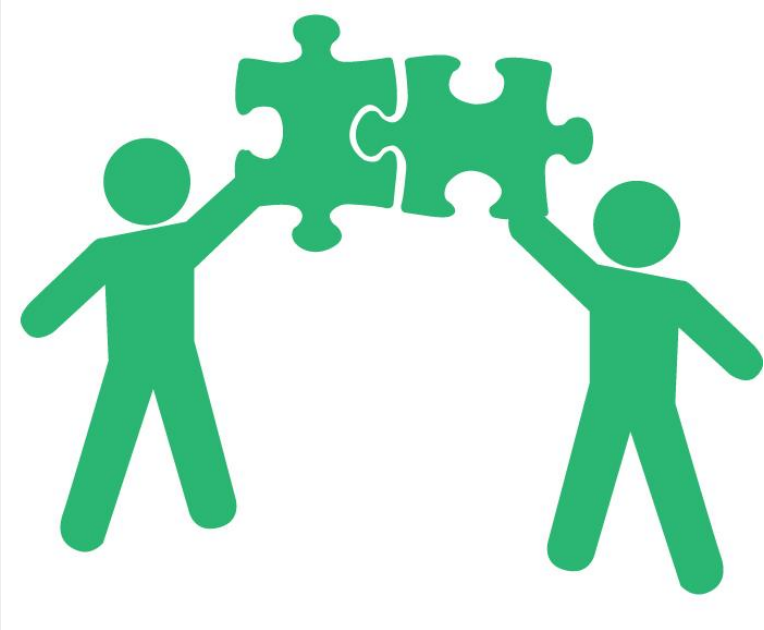
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# Outcomes



- recognise when the allegation threshold may be met
- act immediately to protect children and preserve fairness
- notify and work effectively with the LADO and partner agencies
- make proportionate decisions about risk, suspension and support
- plan, undertake and report a fair internal investigation
- turn findings into individual and organisational learning

# How we will work today



- confidentiality — share learning, not identifying detail
  - respectful challenge and curiosity
  - one conversation at a time
  - child-centred and fair to everyone involved
  - use plain language; challenge jargon
  - contribute experience without feeling obliged
  - share expertise and collaborate
- 
- comfort break at 10.45-11am
  - recognise impact of training
  - reach out
  - key learning point

## Hold the allegation — not a conclusion

“

“Respond as though it may be true; investigate as though it may not be.”

”

Neutral • child-centred • fair

## Culture can conceal or surface harm



Risk grows when:

- boundaries drift and poor practice becomes normal
- children's accounts are minimised or explained away
- staff fear challenge, retaliation or being labelled disloyal
- concerns are handled in isolation
- patterns across incidents, homes or staff are not analysed

# Protective features are visible in everyday practice

- leaders invite challenge and act on it
- children are heard, believed and kept informed
- supervision tests boundaries, assumptions and patterns
- staff know routes for concerns and whistleblowing
- records support effective monitoring and information sharing
- managers build a confident working relationship with the LADO



## Activity • raising concerns

Disclosure exercise

Write down something you've never told anybody before.

## Activity • impact of a disclosure



A concern is raised about a staff member seeking opportunities to be alone with a young person and not maintaining boundaries.

How might this feel for:

- the young person?
- the person raising it?
- the staff member?
- the manager?
- the wider team?

What does each person need from the process?

# First Response

- Interim protective measures
- Sharing information
- Contain the risk
- Preserve evidence
- Co-ordinate response
- Record actions



## Receiving a first disclosure: protect, preserve, notify

- Make the child and anyone else safe.
- Listen; clarify only what is necessary. Do not investigate.
- Considering the risk and immediate threat
- Preserve records, messages, CCTV and other potential evidence.
- Record the concern and the exact words used.
- Report immediately to the senior manager.
- Inform the LADO within one working day where a threshold may be met.



## The LADO: oversight, advice and coordination



The Local Authority Designated Officer oversees allegations about adults working or volunteering with children and helps agencies manage them without delay, in a coordinated, thorough and fair way.



Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026

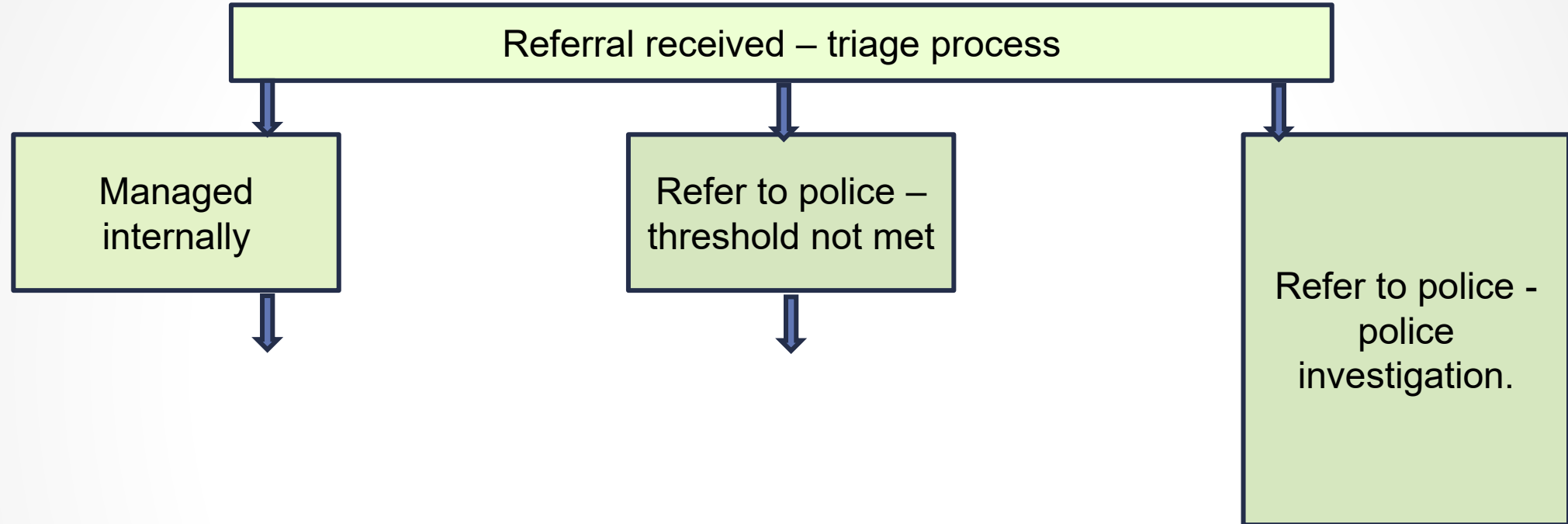
## When may it be an allegation?

### or a suitability concern?

- harmed a child, or may have harmed a child
- possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child
- behaved towards a child in a way indicating a risk of harm

- behaved—or may have behaved—in a way indicating they may not be suitable to work with children

# The interface between safeguarding, disciplinary and criminal investigations



Internal investigation – consider risk, analysis of findings

Decision making process (panel hearing?). Establish outcome

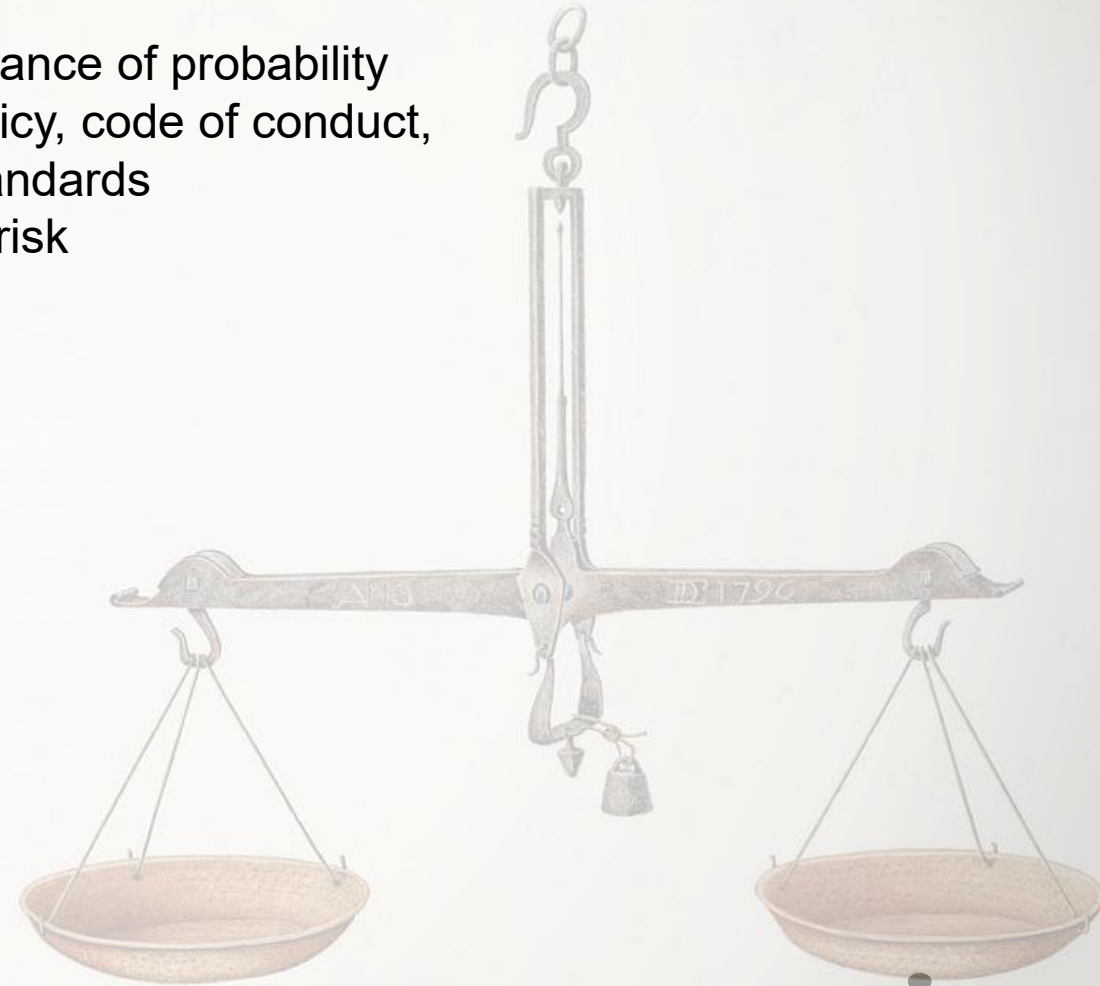
Findings inform disciplinary process

## Criminal Investigation

Threshold – beyond reasonable doubt  
Breaches in legislation  
Investigate the allegation

## Safeguarding investigation

Threshold – balance of probability  
Breaches in policy, code of conduct,  
professional standards  
Investigate the risk



## **CONCERN ABOUT PRACTICE**

A quality, capability or practice issue that does not indicate harm or unsuitability. Address, record and review under local policy.

**Concern, conduct issue  
or allegation?**

## **CONDUCT / BOUNDARY CONCERN**

May be lower-level alone, but patterns or context can raise the risk. Share with the designated manager and check local procedures.

## **ALLEGATION THRESHOLD MAY BE MET**

Protect, record and contact the LADO without delay. Do not wait for proof.

# Case studies

In your groups provide an example of:

A concern about practice

A conduct/boundary concern

An allegation of harm or abuse

Triage • decide • explain

## Rapid triage • what level of concern?



A staff member is heard shouting at a young person because they are being disruptive.

A young person says a residential staff member gave them an expensive gift.

A staff member receives a disclosure and does not report it to the safeguarding lead.

For each: what else do you need to know, what do you do now, and who needs to know?

## Suspension is a risk decision—not a default

**Use a reasoned, proportionate risk assessment. Consider whether safe alternatives can manage the risk, and record why the chosen measure is necessary.**

**Proportionate • reviewed • time-limited**

## Interim risk management: four questions



What is the specific risk to this child—or to other children?  
Could remaining at work compromise evidence, witnesses or the process?

Can the risk be managed by duties, supervision, location, contact restrictions or redeployment?

When will the decision be reviewed, and who will communicate it?

Suspension may be necessary, but the rationale must be evidence-based and recorded.

# Delay harms everyone—and can weaken the evidence

Delay can affect:

- the child's safety, trust and willingness to engage
- the staff member's wellbeing, reputation and employment
- memory, evidence quality and witness availability
- team culture, staffing stability and confidence in leadership

Set a case plan, named owner, review points and communication rhythm. Escalate drift.



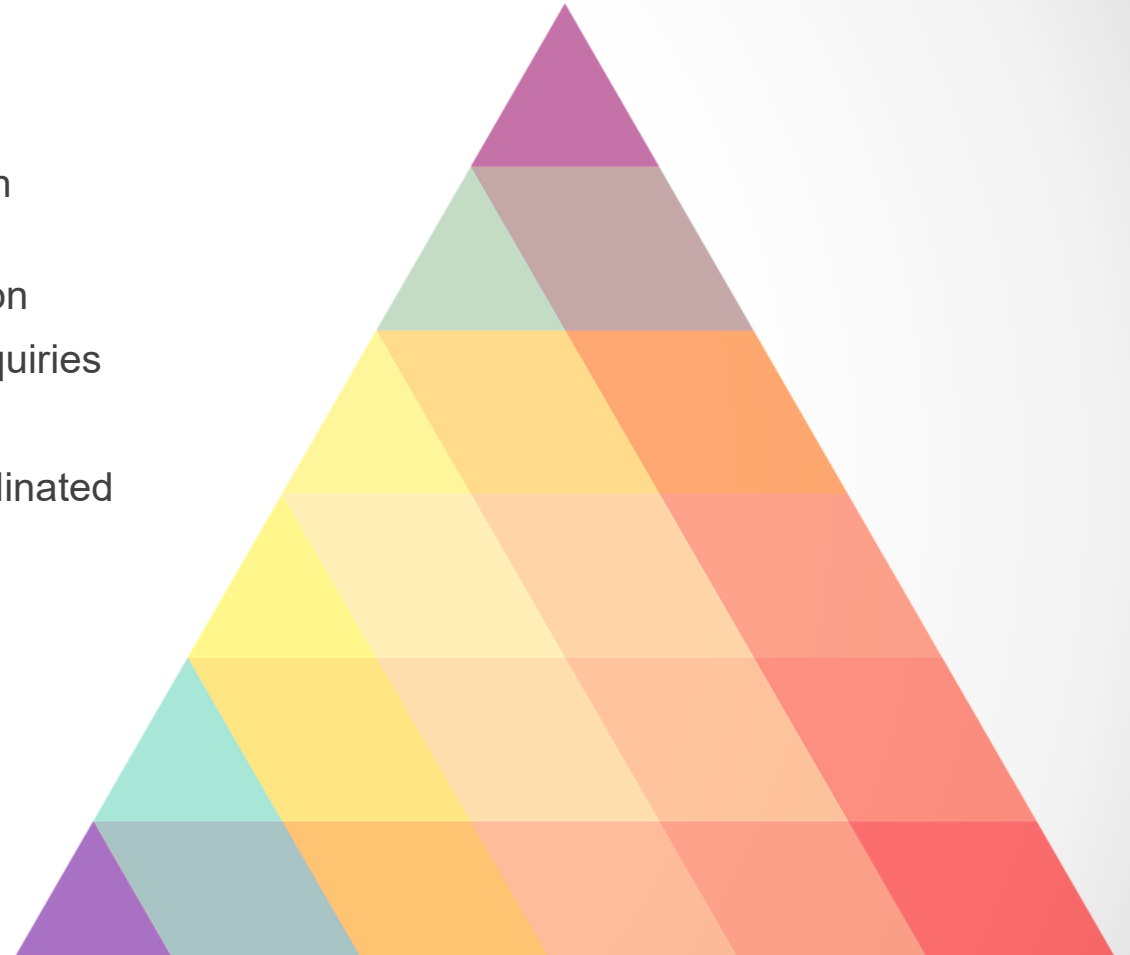
# Information sharing: necessary, proportionate, recorded

- share early enough to protect children and coordinate action
- share relevant facts—not speculation or unnecessary detail
- check what the child, parents and staff member can safely be told
- follow LADO, police and children’s social care advice on timing
- record what was shared, with whom, why and under which lawful basis
- revisit communication as the case changes



# Possible routes after initial LADO discussion

- no further action under the allegation process, with rationale recorded
- further information gathering or management action
- children's social care assessment / section 47 enquiries
- police investigation
- internal fact-finding or employment process, coordinated with partners
- regulator or professional-body notification where appropriate



The routes may run in parallel—but must not undermine one another.

# Outcomes



- A repeated concern may reveal a pattern; do not dismiss it because earlier concerns were unsubstantiated.
- **Unsubstantiated** means evidence was insufficient—it does not mean the concern was invented.
- **False** means evidence shows the allegation did not happen.
- **Malicious** requires evidence of a deliberate intention to deceive.
- **Substantiated** means there is sufficient evidence to conclude the concern was upheld.

Consider support or safeguarding needs behind every allegation and agree a coordinated response.

# Key learning points

What has been your key learning point from today?

