



Charities working for children and families

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Dear Colleague,

***Re: Handling allegations of abuse made against adults who work with children and young people consultation***

Children England is pleased to have the opportunity to submit a response to the DCSF consultation - *Handling allegations of abuse made against adults who work with children and young people consultation*.

Children England is the leading membership organisation for the children, young people and families voluntary sector. With member organisations working in all parts of the country, ranging from small local groups to the largest household names in children's charities, Children England is in a unique position to use the collective voice of the voluntary sector to achieve positive change for children. Children England provides capacity building, support and information to its members and the wide range of voluntary sector organisations working with children, young people and families. It does this by building active networks, promoting good practice, stimulating policy debate and ensuring that the issues that matter most to its members are taken up with decision makers.

Children England firmly welcomes the Government's renewed focus on the importance of ensuring clear guidance for all people working with children and young people on how to tackle allegations of abuse. The revived focus on the broader agenda of safeguarding following the Baby Peter tragedy puts the need for clear lines of responsibility in handling allegations of abuse in even sharper focus. The children, young people and families' voluntary sector is a crucial player in ensuring the well-being and safety of children and young people is at the heart of the debate on how to handle abuse allegations. In addition,

Children England is working to raise the profile of safeguarding in the sector through the development of the *Safe Network* – run jointly between Children England and the NSPCC.

Our key points on the guidance are below:

### **Section 3: Practice issues**

The section on practice issues is clear. However, a stronger emphasis on the importance of safeguarding would be an improvement. It would also be worthwhile to signpost to other key safeguarding information and guidance in this section.

### **Section 4: The Process**

The section on the process is clear and the map of the stages is clear and helpful. Our main comments on this section are:

Point 72 – If a young person chooses to attend a disciplinary hearing they should be supported to do so. If a young person is impeded in this, they may struggle to find closure over the event in the longer term. Support would include helping the young person to understand the process and procedures of the hearing.

Point 76 –The family and young person should be made aware of independent advocacy services and assisted to access these services.

Point 78 – There is a need to clarify what is meant by ‘where appropriate’. We believe the child should always be notified of the outcomes in a form of communication that they use and understand, and preferably within a time-frame that is meaningful to a child or young person.

### **Section 5: Referral to the ISA**

The section on referral to the ISA provides some information as to how the ISA and the Vetting and Barring Scheme will work. However, there is a great deal of work to be carried out in delivering the key messages on the ISA to an audience wider than the statutory sector. It is also important to clarify key issues on the role of volunteers under the Vetting and Barring Scheme. It is also particularly important to clarify the rules around recruiting employees and volunteers in mental health and substance misuse services where often people with a history of these problems are in the best place to support young people going through these issues. As and when information on the ISA and the Vetting and Barring Scheme is updated or clarified, this must be updated and reflected on guidance on how to handle allegations of abuse.

For more information on any element of this response, please contact Children England’s Policy and Information Officer, Emilie Whitaker on 020 7833 3319 or email [emilie@childrenengland.org.uk](mailto:emilie@childrenengland.org.uk).