



Responding to Disclosure of Non-recent Child Abuse

For use by Woodard Schools

1: OUR PRINCIPLES

We recognise that abuse during childhood can have wide-ranging and serious consequences for that individual. For some victims and survivors these effects endure throughout adult life. In acknowledging this impact, the Woodard model policy on Responding to Disclosure of Non-recent Child Abuse Policy is based on five best practice principles:

- **Recognise** – we will listen to, take seriously, and act responsibly about allegations of abuse.
- **Respond** – we seek to support the welfare of those who report abuse to us, actively listening to what outcomes and support they require.
- **Report** – we will share information carefully, ensuring that actions are respectful, professional, lawful, and based on what we know to be good practice.
- **Record** – we will document, update, and review allegations of abuse to meet our obligations to keep relevant parties both now and in the future informed of progress and the outcome of any investigation.
- **Review** – we will keep individual cases under review so that we might use that learning to continually improve our own policies on safeguarding and wellbeing and those across the Woodard group of schools.

The purpose of this policy is to outline how someone can report an allegation of abuse, the support we can offer, and our commitment to victims and survivors. We take all allegations of abuse seriously. This policy ensures that all staff and governors understand their responsibilities when responding to a disclosure.

2: SCOPE

This policy applies to instances of sexual, physical or emotional abuse disclosed by, or on behalf of, students or staff who have left the school, including those who may have left recently or many years ago. Allegations may be made in regards to incidents in the past perpetrated by students, staff, governors or visitors. Allegations may be made direct; or statutory agencies or other concerned parties may alert the school to a disclosure made directly to them. Any allegations relating to a current student, a current member of staff, or a governor (as a victim, survivor, or perpetrator), are managed in accordance with Hurstpierpoint College's current Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Procedures and are therefore out of scope of this policy.

All staff and governors are instructed to familiarise themselves with this policy, so they are clear about their role, responsibility and expectations in responding to an

allegation of abuse.

3: RESPONSIBILITIES

Governors

The governing body is responsible for ensuring that effective child protection policies and procedures are both in place and regularly reviewed. They are also responsible for the school's compliance with statutory reporting concerning child protection and the disclosure of abuse. They have a duty of care, which includes taking necessary steps to safeguard and protect students and alumni. To that end, the governing body must ensure that there is an appropriate policy on Responding to Disclosure of Non-recent Child Abuse and that it is implemented effectively.

At Hurstpierpoint College; the governor responsible for safeguarding is Philippa Hoyle and the Chair of Governors is Karen Mack. Contact details can be found in the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

The School Executive

The School Executive is responsible for the school's response to any allegation of abuse and should be informed of any allegation that has been disclosed. They are also responsible, on behalf of Governors, for liaison with insurers, solicitors, and other parties as required; and for alerting the Woodard Corporation in a timely fashion that an allegation has been received.

At Hurstpierpoint College this is the Head of College, Dominic Mott. The Head of College will liaise closely with the Chief Financial Officer who will lead any appropriate liaison with relevant third parties, including regulatory bodies, insurers, solicitors and Woodard.

The Designated Child Protection Lead

Each school has an identified person who holds responsibility for child protection and should also be responsible for the implementation of this Policy, the effective management of disclosures of abuse, and mandatory reporting obligations. This includes initiating preliminary enquiries into alleged concerns and reporting to the relevant statutory agencies. In addition, they will provide advice and support to the Head and other senior members of staff on best practice in adhering to this Policy and Procedures, safer working practices, and management of allegations and investigations.

At Hurstpierpoint College, the Designated Safeguarding Lead is Caty Jacques and Head of Safeguarding is Siobhan McCurdy.

Alumni Response

Each school should establish a small team for Alumni Response, who will respond appropriately to any allegation of non-recent abuse received. Where schools have an independent Alumni body, the school should bring this policy to their attention and agree an appropriate process for honouring it, given that disclosures will most often come forward through alumni groups. The designated Alumni Response team can provide initial support, information, and signposting to external support organisations. They should contact an individual within 3 working days of receiving any allegation of abuse (5 during school holidays). The Response team is made up of senior members of the safeguarding team. The team will meet to discuss any allegations so that the

appropriate statutory notifications can be considered and implemented where necessary. Any disclosures made to the Alumni Response team will be treated as confidential and shared carefully, ensuring that actions are respectful, professional and lawful.

At Hurstpierpoint College, Gareth Doodes is the Director of Foundation and manages the alumni communication. He is briefed on this policy, has responsibility to share reporting procedures with the alumni and will pass on concerns raised to the Alumni Response Team.

The Alumni Response team at Hurst College will consist of senior members of the safeguarding team: the Designated Safeguarding Lead - Caty Jacques, Head of Safeguarding - Siobhan McCurdy and Head of College – Dominic Mott. Darren Carpenter (Chief Financial Officer) will also be included.

Front Line Contact

The Chair, Governors, the Head, or staff such as Receptionists, the Head's PA, the Alumni Office, the Chaplain, secretaries and the marketing team are most likely to receive any emails or calls regarding allegations of abuse. These should all be given training in order to best handle contact of this nature. They will be the first point of contact with the school, taking down contact details from any calls, and arranging for a member of Alumni Response team to contact them to discuss it further. The school may wish to prepare a standard holding reply for any written disclosures received.

At Hurstpierpoint College, Siobhan McCurdy (Head of Safeguarding) will ensure that these staff are appropriately trained to receive such contact.

All Staff

All staff are responsible for ensuring that all abuse concerns are reported to the Designated Child Protection Team, by emailing concerns to staffconcerns@hppc.co.uk or emailing / speaking to Dominic Mott, Caty Jacques or Siobhan McCurdy in accordance with this Policy and accompanying procedures.

4: MAKING AN ALLEGATION OF ABUSE

There are various ways to contact us to report abuse and to talk about concerns:

- Call the College on 01273 833636 and ask to speak to Alumni Response team
- Email your concerns to staffconcerns@hppc.co.uk or safeguarding@hppc.co.uk
- Write to us at: Alumni Response team, College Lane, Hurstpierpoint, West Sussex BN6 9JS
- Report your allegation directly to the Police by calling 101
- Contact one of the support organisations listed in Appendix A.

5: SCHOOL RESPONSE – Direct Disclosure by a victim/survivor

Phonecalls

If a member of frontline staff receives a call regarding allegations of abuse, callers are asked not to tell their story or to detail the allegation in the first phone call, but instead the person taking the call (the call handler) will take down contact details and assure the caller that a designated specialist will call them back. Details will be recorded and

include:

- Name (if the caller wishes to disclose this)
- Preferred method of contact & contact details
- The preferred time for us to call back
- If someone else answers their phone, can we identify ourselves as the school?
- Is it safe to leave a voicemail identifying ourselves?
- Years attended school (if this is applicable and if the caller wishes to disclose this)

The call handler will email the details to Alumni Response team to inform them of the call. A member of Alumni Response team will contact the caller within 3 working days, or 5 within the school holidays, although they will attempt to contact them sooner, if possible.

If the call is outside normal working hours (Mon-Fri, 9-5), they can go through to the on-call member of the senior leadership team, who will pass the same details to Alumni Response team, who will contact them within 3 working days, or 5 within the school holidays.

Emails

When an allegation is received by email, it will be allocated to Alumni Response team, who will attempt to make contact with the sender within 3 working days, or 5 within the school holidays.

Letters

When an allegation is received by letter, it will be allocated to a member of the Alumni Response team, who will aim to contact the sender within 3 working days of receipt of the letter, 5 within the school holidays, and otherwise no later than 10 days.

Anonymous Reports

Anonymous allegations will be taken seriously and reported to the statutory agencies as appropriate.

Speaking to the Alumni Response Team

The team is specially trained to deal with calls of this nature and to understand the wide-ranging impact that childhood abuse and trauma can have on an individual. They also understand that every individual's experience is unique. They will listen carefully, sympathetically and acknowledge the experience.

They will have if possible, taking into consideration the extent of the information provided and the accessibility of archive information, reviewed the relevant student information before calling, emailing or writing to the victim/survivor. They will also seek to ascertain what next steps, or outcome, the victim/survivor is looking for. They can signpost to further support. They can provide details of current policies at the school and can arrange a visit to the school, if the victim/survivor feels it would be beneficial to their recovery.

They will record the details of the allegation electronically, which will be securely logged in the confidential safeguarding files. This will be immediately passed to the

rest of the Alumni Support Team and the case discussed. The school leadership team will then be informed of the case. Next steps will depend on what actions the victim/survivor would like to see.

It is important to note that it is our practice to refer all potentially criminal allegations of abuse, perpetrated by staff, students, or third parties, whether alive or dead, to the relevant statutory agencies, as we have a duty of care under law.

It is not the school's role to investigate allegations of abuse, as we are not qualified or able to do this. Investigations are conducted by statutory agencies such as the Local Authority Designated Officer and the police. We will work closely with these agencies to assist with any investigation. Where an allegation concerns a current member of staff, as well as reporting to statutory agencies, we will apply our employment policies.

5.2 SCHOOL RESPONSE – Disclosure on behalf of a victim/survivor (non-professional third party)¹

In the event of contact being made on behalf of a victim/survivor then the above procedures will be followed but the Alumni Response team will initially contact the third party to understand from them whether or not they have the consent of the victim/survivor to speak on their behalf and/or whether the victim/survivor is aware of their contact.

Ideally they will provide written confirmation of consent, if that is not possible it should be confirmed in writing to the third party after the oral confirmation of consent has been given that such a conversation has taken place.

If the third party has consent then they will be asked to share information as described above. Time will be allowed for the third party to liaise with the victim/survivor to ascertain what next steps, or outcome, the victim/survivor is looking for. The Alumni Response team will share with the third party, to pass on to the victim/survivor, details of further support along with details of current policies at the school and offer the possibility of arranging a visit to the school, if the victim/survivor feels it would be beneficial to their recovery. It will be made clear that the victim/survivor can choose to have direct contact at any time if they so choose or to continue their contact through a third party. No direct contact will be made with the victim/survivor unless confirmation is provided that they want to have direct contact.

If the third party does not have the consent of the victim/survivor to discuss matters on their behalf then the Alumni Response are unable to discuss specifics other than to record basic details of the allegations including against whom they are made (to enable any mandatory reporting obligations to be compared with, the LADO and police to be advised), where and when they occurred. Details of further support options along with Alumni Response contact details should be shared with the third party to pass on to the victim/survivor if they are able to.

5.3 SCHOOL RESPONSE – Disclosure on behalf of or about a victim/survivor (professional third party)

Where disclosure is made on behalf of a victim/survivor by their professional representative it is likely to be either

- a Subject Access Request
- a Letter of Claim
- a request by the police for information
- a media enquiry

In each circumstance the school will respond to acknowledge the request and then action accordingly depending upon the type of request and timescales set for responding to the same. As appropriate the school will involve its own external advisors, including insurer, to advise and respond. Direct contact will only be made with the victim/survivor if consent for the same has been provided.

¹ Non-professional includes family, friends, supporters of the victim/survivor, former and current members of staff/volunteers/governors and not legal advisors acting on behalf of a victim/survivor

6: WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

We recognise that each person's case is individual to their circumstances and experiences. We will tailor our response accordingly, with the victim/survivor at the centre. We strive to support former students through the disclosure process and beyond. Support may include help from qualified outside agencies, signposting to further support, or information on current practices at the school today.

Acknowledgement

Anyone who reports an allegation of abuse will receive a written acknowledgement of their experience from the Head of College

Support & Advice

We are not qualified counsellors and cannot provide long term emotional support to alumni. What we can do is signpost to other agencies who specialise in this area, some of which are listed at Appendix A.

Third Party Support

We know that some former students would value an independent point of contact because they don't feel comfortable, or able, to contact the school directly. We are happy to support a counselling service local to the alumni or online, to help shape a plan for on-going support and/or counselling. We can also provide support throughout the process of reporting allegations to the authorities.

Reporting to Police/Criminal Proceedings

As we have stated above, we will refer all potential criminal allegations whether perpetrated by staff, students or third parties, to the police and/or relevant statutory agencies.

In cases where there is a potential criminal act, but the victim/survivor does not wish to make a report, or share their details with the police, we will share intelligence with the police anonymously, not sharing the victim/survivor's name.

If you do wish to make a formal report to the police, we will support you in this and assist in the investigation in any way that we can. We do not ourselves investigate cases, as we are not qualified to do so, but will work closely with the authorities in any investigation.

Where a former member of staff is implicated, a DBS referral will be made if there is any risk to children.

Engaging with the School

Some people find it useful to call or visit the school to see how it has changed and speak to the current pastoral team about how we manage wellbeing, safeguarding, and child protection in the present day. We are happy to accommodate this, if it is an avenue that you are interested in. We can also provide you with a copy of our current policies for reassurance.

Accessing your school file

Former students can make a written request to access their school file. We will apply the principles of the Data Protection Act 2018 and the GDPR in dealing with that request.

Civil litigation

Some may wish to initiate civil proceedings against the school. The school will ensure that our insurers and solicitors are appropriately notified and kept informed of all cases that involve potential civil litigation proceedings.

7: OUTCOMES & LEARNING

We will review each case that we receive, and the learnings from those reviews will inform and develop our best practice in how we respond both to allegations of abuse, and to our current policies on well-being, child protection, and staff conduct/disciplinary. We will disseminate this learning appropriately throughout the Woodard family and beyond in order to promote effective practice and inter-agency working.

APPENDIX A: LINKS TO SUPPORT ORGANISATIONS

1. GENERAL SUPPORT

The Samaritans is available around the clock 365 days of the year to provide confidential emotional support for people who are experiencing feelings of distress or despair: www.samaritans.org

The Survivors Trust is a national membership organisation supporting specialist rape and sexual abuse services in the voluntary sector. They have over 120 member organisations throughout the UK and Ireland who provide specialist support services to over 100,000 survivors each year: www.thesurvivorstrust.org

Survivors UK offers a range of support services to men who experienced childhood or adult sexual abuse: <https://www.survivorsuk.org/>

Rape Crisis England and Wales, and Scotland provides a directory of local support services:

Rape Crisis England & Wales: www.rapecrisis.org.uk

Rape Crisis Scotland: www.rapecrisisscotland.org.uk

NAPAC - National Association for People Abused in Childhood: www.napac.org.uk

Victim Support: www.victimsupport.org.uk

2. LEGAL ADVICE & SUPPORT

Citizen's Advice Bureau: <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/family/children-and-young-people/child-abuse/financial-compensation-for-child-abuse/>

Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/criminal-injuries-compensation-authority>

The Law Society can help you find a solicitor specialising in this area of law:
<https://solicitors.lawsociety.org.uk/>

Legal Aid Agency: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/legal-aid-agency>

3. FAMILY SUPPORT

MOSAC was established almost 30 years ago and provides supportive services to non-abusing parents and carers whose children have been sexually abused. Along with counselling and therapy for vicarious trauma, they provide parents with advice on how to talk to and support their children <https://mosac.org.uk/>