

Safeguarding and standards

Reporting safeguarding cases or allegations to BSA: further guidance for member schools.

1. Why are we issuing further guidance?

Since the second version of the BSA Commitment to Care Charter was published in mid-September there have been questions and queries raised about why cases should be reported to BSA, when cases should be reported, how much information needs to be reported and confidentiality. This note covers these points.

2. Why should cases be reported to BSA?

Until now there has been no central resource or information source listing or detailing cases or allegations of abuse faced by UK boarding schools in England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Isle of Man. The UK boarding sector is seeking to improve standards of safeguarding for young people but without any sort of overview of the number and type of cases or allegations it is impossible for this to happen. Since the Charter was first published in Spring 2016, BSA has created a central log (the first of its kind) which now contains information on over 70 cases or allegations, of which around 40 have been reported to BSA by member schools (half a dozen since September). This is already generating data which can feed into safeguarding training, guidance and best practice, including the balance between recent and non-recent cases and common trends. The research team at IICSA has already asked BSA how many cases there are across the sector and by building the central log the sector will be in a much stronger position to answer this question again in the future. The alternative situation of not being able to answer will clearly weaken the sector's claim to be managing safeguarding properly.

3. Which cases or allegations does BSA need to know about?

Recent cases: BSA only needs to know about safeguarding cases which have resulted in a full referral to an external body such as the local authority or the police AND where the case relates to a member of staff or to abuse by one pupil on another (peer on peer). The practical advice here is that a standard conversation with a LADO (or equivalent) which leads to a decision not to take any action does not to be reported. However if the case or allegation is going to be further investigated and/or 'referred to the Charity Commission' as a serious incident report then we would like to be aware of it. Clearly not every member school is a charity, but we hope those which are not will be able to apply the same sort of threshold test.

Non-recent cases: It would be helpful for BSA to receive information on any non-recent cases currently being investigated by the police. There does not appear to be a definitive answer on what is recent or non-recent. But here is a note on the use of language on the IICSA website:

The word 'historical' implies that the sexual abuse happened a long time ago but, for many victims and survivors, the effects of the sexual abuse are still with them today. It also implies that the type of abuse covered by the Inquiry's terms of reference no longer happens in today's society however it is clear that this is still very much the case. We use the term 'non-recent sexual abuse' as this accurately reflects the time that has passed since the sexual abuse happened but does not diminish the IMPACT of the sexual abuse suffered by the victims and survivors.

4. And which not?

BSA does not need to know about cases which relate to matters outside the remit of the school, such as a family matter, or in which the school has contacted external agencies for advice and subsequently been authorised to deal internally. However, BSA is always prepared to give confidential advice and guidance on such matters.

5. When should you tell us?

As soon as you feel able or can, but certainly when, in the case of a school with charitable status, you feel able to tell the Charity Commission.

6. What happens if it only involves day pupils?

If your school has boarding and is a BSA member, please let us know, even if the case does not directly involve boarding. While there is of course a distinction, a case or allegation is still happening within a boarding school so is relevant.

7. How much does BSA need to know?

At a minimum, that you are simply dealing with a case or allegation, so there is no need for you to compromise any confidentiality. However, by sharing more information, if you wish, we can understand more about cases and give better advice or support. We would never expect, nor would it be appropriate, for you to share names and other details which could identify an individual, unless that information already in the public domain.

It might be that you are able to share more information at a much later date, perhaps findings from internal reviews, which will inform BSA safeguarding training and the spreading of best practice. The more we know about cases within our schools, the better the sector's understanding of the landscape, the better we can serve the needs of the membership and the more confidently and professionally we can engage on the sector's behalf with inspectorates, government departments and with the relevant independent inquiries.

8. Who has access to the information?

For continuity three BSA staff (Chief Executive, Director of Operations and Head of Safeguarding and Standards) have restricted user-only access to the central case log. No details of information submitted is shared or discussed beyond this group and the BSA Executive Committee has specifically stated that it must not know the names of any schools on the log, or details of cases. In time, however, the log will enable the BSA to

develop quantitative and qualitative data and knowledge about the sort of cases and allegations happening across the sector, which will help inform and support future guidance, advice and training.

9. Whom should I contact?

In the first instance, BSA Head of Safeguarding and Standards Dale Wilkins via dale@boarding.org.uk or 07905 127650. If Dale is unavailable please contact Chief Executive Robin Fletcher via robin@boarding.org.uk or 07715 460591 or Director of Operations Aileen Kane via aileen@boarding.org.uk or 07894 819810.