

# **AKF Reporting and Responding Procedures: Dealing with Reports of Safeguarding Concerns**

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## **Purpose and scope**

The purpose of these procedures is to provide protocols for dealing with reports of breaches of AKF's Global Safeguarding Manual and Code of Conduct, where the safeguarding violation is alleged to be:

- Against staff or members of the public,
- Perpetrated by staff, volunteers or representatives<sup>1</sup>.

## **Responding Procedures**

### **1. Report is received**

1.1 Reports can reach AKF through various routes. This may be in a structured format such as a letter, e-mail, text or private message on social media. It may also be in the form of informal discussion or rumour. If a staff hears something in an informal discussion or chat that they think is a safeguarding concern, they should report this to the appropriate staff member in AKF. It may come via a third party, including AKF's 'Speak Up' service.

1.1 If a safeguarding concern is disclosed directly to a member of staff, the person receiving the report should bear the following in mind:

- Listen
- Empathise with the person
- Gather some basic details - who, when, where, what, etc. (try and write down these details at the time or as soon as it is possible to do so)
- Repeat/ check your understanding of the situation
- Report to the appropriate staff member (see below)

1.2 The person receiving the report should then document the following information:

- Name of person making report
- Name(s) of alleged survivor(s) of safeguarding incident(s) where relevant (not all incidents/issues will involve victims/survivors) if different from above
- Name(s) of alleged perpetrator(s)
- Description of incident(s)
- Dates(s), times(s) and location(s) of incident

1.3 The person receiving the report should then forward this information to their line manager/Safeguarding Focal Point immediately, but certainly within 24 hours

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<sup>1</sup> Representatives include (but is not limited to) consultants, volunteers, contractors, programme visitors including journalists celebrities and politicians, interns

1.4 However, if for any reason a staff member does not want to report to their line manager or Safeguarding Focal Point, they can report to any senior member of staff, or the AKF Head Office in Geneva (see [Annex X](#) of the Global Safeguarding Manual) or AKF's 'Speak Up' service (see AKF's Global Safeguarding Manual for details of ways to 'speak up').

1.5 If the Subject of Concern is not an employed staff member (for example a contractor staff member or consultant), the concerns should be reported to the relevant organisation.

1.6 Due to the sensitive nature of safeguarding concerns, confidentiality must be maintained during all stages of the reporting process, and information shared on a limited 'need to know' basis only. This includes senior management who might otherwise be appraised of a serious incident.

1.7 If the reporting staff member is not satisfied that AKF is appropriately addressing the report, they have a right to escalate the report, either up the management line, to the AKF Head Office in Geneva (see [Annex X](#)), or to an external statutory body or AKF's 'Speak Up' service.

The staff member will be protected against any negative repercussions as a result of this report as detailed in the Global Safeguarding Manual.

## 2. Assess how to proceed with the report

### 2.1 Determine whether it is possible to take this report forward

- Does the reported incident(s) represent a breach of safeguarding policy?
- Is there sufficient information to follow up this report?

2.2 If the reported incident does not represent a breach of AKF policy but represents a safeguarding risk to others (such as a child safeguarding incident), the report should be referred through the appropriate channels (e.g. local authorities) if it is safe to do so.

2.4 If there is insufficient information to follow up the report, and no way to ascertain this information (for example if the person making the report did not leave contact details), the report should be filed in case it can be of use in the future and look at any wider lesson learning we can take forward.

2.4 If the report raises any concerns relating to children under the age of 18, **seek expert advice immediately**. If at any point in the process of responding to the report (for example during an investigation) it becomes apparent that anyone involved is a child under the age of 18, immediately inform the relevant senior manager and seek expert advice before proceeding.

2.5 If the decision is made to take the report forward, ensure that you have the relevant expertise and capacity to manage a safeguarding case. **If you do not have this expertise in-house, seek immediate assistance** e.g. through another organisation or external capacity (for more information refer to the Global Safeguarding Lead).

2.6 Clarify what, how and with whom information will be shared relating to this case. Confidentiality should be maintained at all times, and information shared on a need-to-know basis only. Decide which information needs to be shared with which stakeholder – information needs may be different.

2.7 AKF has consolidated safeguarding policies but depending on what the report relates to, for example, workplace sexual harassment, this may be dealt with by colleagues from different departments working with senior managers and safeguarding staff.

2.8 AKF will check its obligations to inform relevant bodies when it receives a safeguarding report. These include (but are not limited to)

- Funding/donor organisations<sup>2</sup>
- Umbrella bodies/networks
- Statutory bodies

Some of these may require us to inform them when we receive a report, others may require information on completion of the case, or annual top-line information on cases. When submitting information to any of these bodies, AKF will consider the confidentiality implications very carefully.

### 3. Roles and responsibilities for case management

3.1 A senior manager will act as the Decision Maker for each case. The Decision Maker should not be implicated or involved in the case in any way

3.2 If the report alleges a serious safeguarding violation, we will hold a strategy meeting. This should include:

- Decision Maker
- Person who received the report (such as the focal point, or manager)
- HR manager
- Global Safeguarding Lead (or equivalent)

The strategy meeting should decide the next steps to take, including any protection concerns and support needs for the survivor and other stakeholders (see below).

### 4. Support to survivor where needed/requested

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<sup>2</sup> Actual/potential serious breaches of the safeguarding policy such as alleged sexual misconduct towards staff or beneficiaries by AKF staff, volunteers or representatives or those involving serious fraud/aid diversion might need to be notified at the earliest possible opportunity to relevant donors (for guidance refer to the Global Safeguarding Lead)

4.1 AKF will provide appropriate support to survivors of safeguarding incident(s). NB this should be provided as a duty of care even if the report has not yet been investigated. Support could include (but is not limited to):

- Psychosocial care or counseling
- Medical assistance
- Protection or security assistance (for example being moved to a safe location)

4.2 All decision making on support should be led by the alleged victim/survivor

## 5. Assessing protection or security risks to stakeholders

5.1 For reports relating to serious incidents: AKF will undertake an immediate risk assessment to determine whether there are any current or potential risks to any stakeholders involved in the case, and develop a mitigation plan if required

5.2 Continue to update the risk assessment and plan on a regular basis throughout and after the case as required

## 6. Deciding on next steps

6.1 The Decision Maker decides the next steps. These could be (but are not limited to):

- No further action (for example if there is insufficient information to follow up, or the report refers to incidents outside AKF's remit)
- Investigation is required to gather further information
- Immediate disciplinary action if no further information needed
- Referral to relevant authorities

6.2 If the report concerns representatives (for example volunteers, contractors, consultants), the decision making process will be different. Although associated personnel are not staff members, we have a duty of care to protect anyone who comes into contact with any aspect of our programmes/activities from harm. We cannot follow disciplinary processes with individuals outside AKF, however decisions may be made for example to terminate a contract with a supplier based on the actions of their staff.

6.3 If an investigation is required and the organisation does not have internal capacity, identify resources to conduct the investigation (refer to the Global Safeguarding Lead). If using external capacity, determine which budget this will be covered by.

## 7. Managing investigations if required

7.1 Refer to the AKF's procedures for investigating breaches of policy.

## 8. Making decisions on outcomes of investigations

8.1 The Decision Maker makes a decision based on the information provided in the investigation report. Decisions relating to the Subject of Concern should be made in accordance with AKF's policies and procedures for staff misconduct

8.2 If at this or any stage in the process criminal activity is suspected, the Decision Maker together with AKF HQ Leadership will need to decide whether to refer the report to the relevant authorities. This decision should be made bearing in mind a risk assessment of potential protection risks to all concerned, including the survivor and the Subject of Concern

## 9. Concluding the case

AKF will:

9.1 Document all decisions made resulting from the case clearly and confidentially

9.2 Store all information relating to the case confidentially, and in accordance with AKF policy and local data protection law

9.3 Record anonymised data relating to the case to feed into organizational reporting requirements (e.g. serious incident reporting to Board, safeguarding reporting to donors), and to feed into learning for dealing with future cases