

Safeguarding recognise and reporting process – children and young people

SECTION TWO: RECOGNISING, RESPONDING, RECORDING AND REPORTING A CONCERN

2.1 Introduction

AoC Sport has developed a process which allows individuals to recognise, respond, record and report any concerns or issues they may have relating to a child in its care.

If a child under 18 discloses a concern that they have been or are being harmed, then the receiver of the disclosure has an obligation to report this using AoC Sport safeguarding procedures.

Employees and volunteers at AoC Sport are not expected to be experts at recognising abuse. We do, however, have a responsibility to act if there are any concerns about the behaviour of someone towards a child and to follow the reporting procedure in this document.

2.2 What is abuse?

Abuse is any action by another person – adult or child – that causes significant harm. Abuse is any form of physical, emotional or sexual mistreatment or lack of care that leads to injury or harm. It commonly occurs within a relationship of trust or responsibility and represents an abuse of power or a breach of trust. Abuse can happen to a child regardless of their age, gender, race or ability.

Somebody may abuse or neglect a young person by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Young people may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting by those known to them or, more rarely, by a stranger. Children can be abused by adults, either male or female, or by other children and young people.

Any allegations or suspicions of abuse, poor practice or bullying **must to be responded to and reported** in line with our reporting procedures.

There are 4 main types of abuse: neglect, physical abuse, sexual abuse and emotional abuse. Young people can also be harmed through poor practice and bullying within a sport setting.

Neglect

This is when adults consistently or repeatedly fail to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs which could result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development e.g. failure to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing; failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger; or the failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include refusal to give love, affection and attention.



Neglect in sport could include a coach or supervisor repeatedly failing to ensure children are safe, exposing them to undue cold, heat or extreme weather conditions without ensuring adequate clothing or hydration; exposing them to unnecessary risk of injury e.g. by ignoring safe practice guidelines, failing to ensure the use of safety equipment, or by requiring young people to participate when injured or unwell.

Physical abuse

This is when someone physically hurts or injures children by hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, biting, scalding, suffocating, drowning or otherwise causing harm. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer feigns the symptoms of, or deliberately causes, ill health to a child whom they are looking after e.g. Munchausen's Syndrome by proxy.

Physical abuse in sport may be when the nature and intensity of training or competition exceeds the capacity of the child's immature and growing body; where coaches encourage the use of drugs or harmful substances to enhance performance or delay puberty; if athletes are required to participate when injured; or when sanctions used by coaches imposed involve inflicting pain.

Emotional abuse

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill-treatment of a child so as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person.

It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children or even the over protection of a child. It may involve causing children to feel frightened or in danger by being constantly shouted at, threatened or taunted which may make the child very nervous and withdrawn. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill-treatment of a child.

Emotional abuse in sport may occur if children are subjected to constant criticism, name-calling, sarcasm, bullying, racism or pressure to perform to unrealistically high expectations; or when their value or worth is dependent on sporting success or achievement.

Sexual abuse

This is where children and young people are abused by adults (both male and female) or other children who use them to meet their own sexual needs. This could include full sexual intercourse, masturbation, oral sex, anal intercourse, kissing and sexual fondling. Showing children pornographic material (books, videos, pictures) or taking pornographic images of them are also forms of sexual abuse.

Sexual abusers groom children, protective adults and clubs/organisations in order to create opportunities to abuse and reduce the likelihood of being reported.

In sport, coaching techniques which involve physical contact with children can create situations where sexual abuse can be disguised and may therefore go unnoticed.



The power and authority of, or dependence on, the coach if misused, may also lead to abusive situations developing. Contacts made within sport and pursued e.g. through texts, Facebook, Twitter or Instagram have been used to groom children for abuse.

Bullying

Whilst bullying is not technically a type of child abuse AoC Sport recognises that this is a serious issue in sport and society in general. Bullying is deliberately hurtful behaviour, usually repeated over a period of time, where it is difficult for those being bullied to defend themselves.

Behaviour may be insulting, intimidating, humiliating, malicious (nasty), degrading or offensive. It produces uncomfortable, negative feelings for the person to whom it is intended. Bullying by peers can occur whenever children and young people come together, including within sport situations.

Bullying can take many forms, and is harmful to the victim. It may be physical such as hitting; online or cyber such as abusive messages, comments or images on social media; involve damage or theft of property; based on someone's gender, ethnicity, sexuality or disability; or about their sporting ability.

Where anyone has concerns about a child or the behaviour of an adult towards a child this should be addressed immediately and a report forwarded to the AoC Sport Lead Safeguarding Officer or referred directly to the AoC Sport Lead Safeguarding Officer for their actions.

Poor practice

Poor practice is behaviour of an individual in a position of responsibility which falls below the organisation's required standard (typically as described in the college, club or organisation's Code of Conduct).

Poor practice may not be immediately dangerous or intentionally harmful to a young person but is likely to set a poor example.

Poor practice is potentially damaging to the individual, the organisation and to young people who experience it. For example, coaching with alcohol on the breath, smoking, swearing, or not paying due care and attention to participants all constitute poor practice.

Poor practice can sometimes lead to, or create, an environment conducive to more serious abuse. It may also lead to suspicions about the individual's motivation, even where no harm is intended. For example, if a coach is giving someone too much attention, regularly transports young people in their car, or encourages physical contact with children without obvious justification.

Reasons for taking appropriate action to report concerns

There may be a number of reasons an individual finds it necessary to report a concern. These include:

- In response to something a child has said
- In response to signs or suspicions of harm
- In response to allegations made against a member of staff, volunteer or organisation



- In response to allegations made about a parent, carer, or another person
- In response to bullying
- In response to a breach of code of conduct/poor practice
- Observation of inappropriate behaviour.

*Please note this list is not exhaustive.

It is important to note that even if an incident occurs outside of AoC Sport's environment, it should still be reported to AoC Sport if the adult or child concerned is involved with AoC Sport.

There are four steps involved in taking appropriate action – known as the 4 R's. Each is essential.

1. **Recognising** signs and indicators of abuse
2. **Responding** to the disclosure, suspicion and/or allegation
3. **Recording** the relevant information
4. **Reporting** the relevant information.

2.3. Recognising signs and indicators of abuse

Recognising child abuse is not easy. It is important that signs of abuse are not ignored. Individuals working with children should be alert to general signs of possible abuse and be able to identify indicators of each type of abuse.

Indications that a child may be being abused may include:

- Changing their usual routine
- Unexplained changes in behaviour such as becoming very quiet, withdrawn or disruptive
- Becoming anxious or lacking in confidence
- Possessions going missing
- Becoming aggressive or unreasonable
- Starting to stammer or stopping communication
- Unexplained cuts or bruises or suspicious injuries
- Starting to bully other children
- Being frequently dirty, hungry or inadequately dressed
- Displaying sexual behaviour or using sexual language inappropriate for their age
- Difficulty in making friends
- Seeming afraid of parents/guardians
- Variations in eating patterns, including overeating or loss of appetite
- Excessive fear of making mistakes
- Being frightened to say what's wrong.



It should be recognised that this list is not exhaustive and the presence of some or all these indicators, it does not necessarily mean abuse is taking place, but maybe indicative of a need to report concerns.

If you have cause for concern do not take responsibility yourself but report your concerns following AoC Sport's procedures so that others can decide what, if any, action should be taken.

2.4. Responding to a disclosure, suspicion or allegation

If a child tells you they or another person is being or has been abused, or you witness or become concerned about someone's behaviour you should:

- Stay calm
- Keep an open mind – do not make assumptions, judgments, show disgust or disbelief
- Listen carefully and take what they say seriously
- Let the child know that if what they tell you makes you at all concerned about them or someone else, you will have to pass the information on to someone who can help them
- Tell them they are not to blame and that they have done the right thing by telling you
- Keep questions to an absolute minimum, ask questions to clarify information only e.g. start a question with: tell me about, explain to me, describe
- Reassure them and explain you have to share what they have said
- Be very careful not to promise that you will keep the information to yourself
- Report the concerns but do not decide if abuse has taken place
- Make a record of everything said and any actions taken as soon as possible
- Share with the child that you will need to pass the concern to the AoC Sport Lead Safeguarding Officer to help the child.

Do not:

- Make promises or agree to keep information a secret
- Make negative comments about the alleged abuser
- Approach any alleged abuser to discuss the concern
- Discuss the allegations with anyone who does not need have a need to know
- Take sole responsibility
- Delay in reporting the concerns
- Ignore what has been disclosed.



2.5. Recording the incident

Wherever possible, any report must be made in writing using the Safeguarding Incident Report Form, which is included in the accompanying template section. The Safeguarding Incident Report form can also be found on the AoC Sport website or on the internal V drive.

Information must be accurate, complete and factual, including the name and contact details of the person reporting the incident.

Throughout the entire process confidentiality is vital. Every effort must be made to ensure confidentiality is maintained when an allegation has been made and is being investigated.

Minimise the number of people that you share a concern with; information should only be shared on a “need to know” basis.

This means only those individuals stated within the reporting structure who will be able to manage and resolve the situation and no-one else, unless directed by statutory agencies or the AoC Sport Safeguarding Team.

Confidentiality is essential, and it will ensure:

- The safety of the child involved
- Action is taken to protect the child
- Individuals involved in any complaint are protected from gossip and assumptions
- Individuals who have a complaint against them receive fair treatment.

2.6. Reporting

It is acknowledged that the suggestion that a child has or is being abused can evoke strong emotions. It can be very difficult to hear suspicions of allegations, but it is important that concerns are acted on.

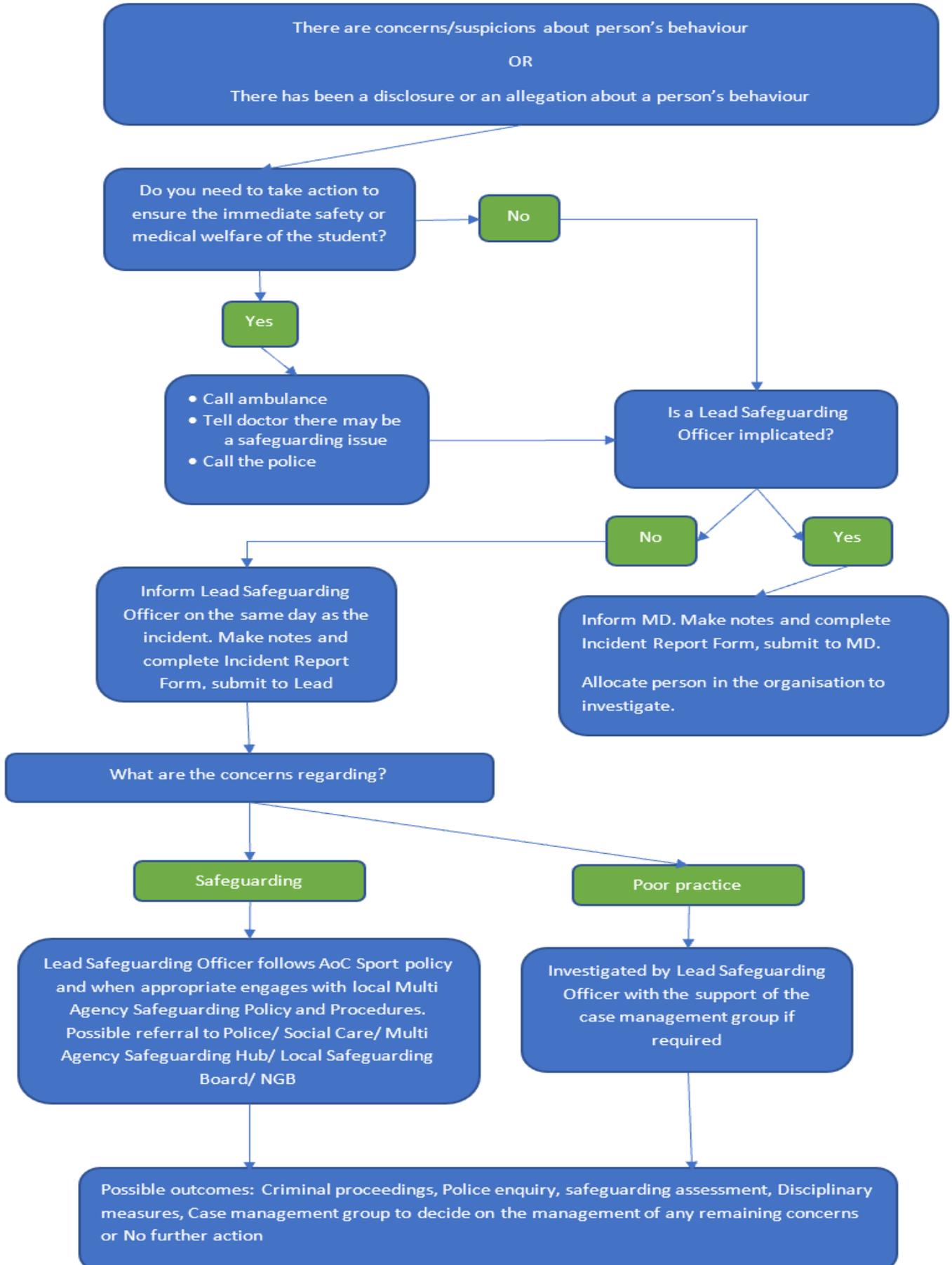
If indicators of abuse or a disclosure give you cause for concern, it is not your responsibility to decide if abuse is taking place, but it is your responsibility to act on your concerns.

AoC Sport has clear procedures for reporting concerns. It is important that you follow the procedure detailed and fulfil your role in the process. If you become aware of any suspicions or concerns about the safety or welfare of a child, pass these on to the AoC Sport Lead Safeguarding Officer on the same day.

It is helpful to complete the Safeguarding Incident Report Form as this sets out the information which is useful. You should report as much detail as possible but avoid hearsay or assumptions.

The Lead Safeguarding Officer is responsible for implementing any further procedures should this be necessary.

The flowchart on the following page illustrate the reporting process.





2.7. How AoC Sport will respond to suspicions or concerns

How to Raise a Concern

In the first instance individuals should raise a concern with the Lead Safeguarding Officer or email safeguarding@aac.co.uk. Individuals should set out the background and history of the concern, giving names, dates and places where possible and the reason why they are particularly concerned about the situation.

If you believe you have not received a satisfactory response to your concern, or your concern is about the AoC Sport Lead Safeguarding Officer you should contact the Managing Director.

Incident Referral Process

As soon as the AoC Sport Lead Safeguarding Officer receives written notification of an incident, allegation or disclosure they assume management of the case (provided it is not being dealt with by the police and/or Children's Services/Local Authority Designated Officer [LADO]).

The individual should set out the background and history of the concern, giving names, dates and places where possible and the reason why they are concerned about the situation.

2.8 Review process and document control

This document has been approved by the Management Team and the AoC Sport board. AoC Sport will review the Safeguarding Policy every three years, or whenever there is major change in legislation related to Safeguarding or the AoC Sport organisational structure. The Implementation Plan will be reviewed on a six-monthly basis.

Version No.	Date of issue	Author(s)	Comments and description of changes
1.0	19 June 2019	Prepared by AoC Sport Policy Manager	