



WRU SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN

DON'T TACKLE IT ALONE



Contents

	Page No.
SAFGUARDING CHILDREN	4
Safe Recruitment – Working with Children	5
Position of Trust	13
Bullying	26
Child Sexual Exploitation	27
Discriminatory Language and Behaviour	28
Recognising Poor Practice and Abuse	28
Reporting Concerns – Don't be a Bystander	34
Responding and Recording Information – The Six R's	37
Reporting and Responding to Concerns Flowchart	40
The Role of Statutory Agencies - Child Protection	41

A young male rugby player in a dark jersey and headgear is running with the ball, looking forward with a determined expression. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent red filter. In the background, other players are visible, and there is a faint, repeating pattern of stylized human figures in white.

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN

Background

The WRU acknowledges the duty to care to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child and is committed to ensuring that safeguarding practice reflects statutory responsibilities, government guidance and promotes best practice.

The Welsh Government is firmly committed to promoting children's rights and has led the way in this area. All children in Wales have rights, there are no conditions attached to them and nobody has the power to give them or take them away from children.

Children and young people have rights under the Human Rights Act 1998, but they also have rights under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). All Governments who have signed up to the UNCRC, including the Welsh Government, have to make sure that children, young people and adults know about and understand the UNCRC.

The link below provides more detail on Children's Rights in Wales

[https://www.gov.wales/childrens-rights-information-children#:~:text=All%20children%20in%20Wales%20have,of%20the%20Child%20\(UNCRC\).](https://www.gov.wales/childrens-rights-information-children#:~:text=All%20children%20in%20Wales%20have,of%20the%20Child%20(UNCRC).)

In Children and Young People: Rights to Action 2004 the Welsh Assembly Government established seven core aims through which it would work to ensure all children:

- have a positive start in life.
- have a comprehensive range of education and learning opportunities.
- enjoy the best possible health and are free from abuse, victimisation and exploitation.
- have access to play, leisure, sporting and cultural activities.
- are listened to, treated with respect, and have their race and cultural identity recognised.
- have a safe home and a community which supports physical and emotional wellbeing.
- are not disadvantaged by poverty.

The WRU acknowledge that it can make a significant contribution to the achievement of these outcomes for children involved in the sport. Organisations that provide services for children (defined in the Children Act 1989 as anyone under the age of 18 years) have a duty to safeguard and promote their welfare. The concept of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is defined within Safeguarding Children: Working Together under the Children Act 2004, (Welsh Assembly Government, 2006) as:

- Protecting children from abuse and neglect.
- Preventing impairment of their health or development.
- Ensuring that they receive safe and effective care so as to enable them to have optimum life.

Working Together under the Children Act 2004 sets out how all agencies and professionals should work in partnership to safeguard and promote children's welfare and protect them from harm.

Working practices and procedures should be adopted that minimise situations where abuse of children may occur, such as unobserved contact. It is also good practice to draw up codes of practice for coaches', parents' and children's participation in activities, and disseminate these codes of practice as widely as possible.

Safe Recruitment – Working with Children

Policy Statement

The WRU believe everyone has a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children and young people, through safe recruitment to ensure that they have the opportunity to participate in a safe and inclusive environment.

The WRU are committed to equality and anti-discriminatory practice. We will give equal priority to keeping all children and young people safe regardless of their age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation. We are also committed to recognising that some children are additionally vulnerable because of the impact of discrimination, previous experiences, their level of dependency, communication needs or other issues.

The WRU are committed to supporting clubs, hubs and regions to ensure that they have safe recruitment policies in accordance with the WRU Safeguarding Policy by:

- listening to children and respecting them.
- appointing a designated national governing body safeguarding lead for strategic matters.
- appointing a designated national governing body safeguarding lead for operational matters.
- working with Club Safeguarding Officers to develop safe and inclusive environments with the aim of developing a safeguarding culture within the game in Wales.
- appointing a Board Champion who takes responsibility for safeguarding at the highest level in the organisation.
- working with the Independent Safeguarding Advisory Group to provide external scrutiny and quality assurance, through a review process in relation to the safe recruitment process.
- safeguarding and protecting all children and young people through the implementation of robust safer recruitment practices.
- identifying and rejecting applicants who are unsuitable to work with children and young people.
- responding to concerns about the suitability of applicants during the recruitment process.
- responding to concerns about the suitability of employees and volunteers once they have begun their role.
- ensuring all new staff participate in an induction which includes child protection.
- reviewing the policy as and when required or at a minimum on a three-year cycle.

To ensure that the right people are recruited as volunteers in these important roles, any volunteers who wish to participate in rugby related activity, which involves unsupervised contact

with children or working with adults at risk, will be subject to a suitability risk assessment through the WRU Safe Recruitment procedures.

Regulated Activity – Working with Children

It is illegal for an employer to knowingly employ someone in a regulated position if they are barred from doing so. It is also an offence for the individual who has been barred to apply for a regulated position (one which involves spending regular time working with children)

Any eligible organisation recruiting for a position (paid or unpaid) that falls within the definition of regulated activity relating to children, may request an applicant to obtain an enhanced DBS Check with barred list check to help determine their suitability for the position, prior to engaging them. Eligible staff in post may also be re-checked to help confirm their ongoing suitability.

There are many different aspects of 'Regulated Activity' which relate to unsupervised contact with children. There are a number of different tasks that relate to the supervision of children in a sporting environment, and those tasks have to be completed on a regular basis as follows:

- Once a week or more.
- Three or more occasions in a period of 30 days.
- Overnight between 2.00am and 6.00am.

The tasks that relate to this are teaching, training, or instructing children. Caring, supervising or providing advice and guidance on well-being to children would also meet the criteria, and if you are providing transport specifically for children on that regular basis then this would also meet the criteria.

Who does this apply to in Welsh Rugby?

Based on the above criteria, the following roles are defined as those staff or volunteers that are required to be safely recruited through the SAFER Recruitment process (see below)

- Coaches
- Team Managers
- Medical Staff or First Aiders
- Match Officials

WRU Safe Recruitment Process for Volunteers

The WRU works in partnership with clubs, hubs and regions to ensure that there is a safe recruitment process in place and have a risk management process that considers the suitability of volunteers. This process ensures that there are appropriate and fair vetting procedures in place, based on information gathered from a number of sources, including the Disclosure and Barring Service.

The WRU operate an online DBS application process which is managed at club level by CSO's who are responsible for processing applications.

Our rugby clubs rely heavily on motivated and enthusiastic volunteers to work with children in rugby, and without them our clubs could not function. However, some individuals will try to use rugby clubs and events to gain access to children for inappropriate reasons. The WRU are committed to ensuring that there is a robust, safe and practical approach to volunteer recruitment.

Why is Safe Recruitment Important?

Safe recruitment is important as abusers will try to take advantage of poor systems and look for opportunities and gaps in the process.

It is extremely important that volunteer Club Safeguarding Officers are supported by the WRU, other volunteers, and the club committee or board to have appropriate safeguards and recruitment processes in place.

Safe Recruitment process (SAFER)

Safeguarding Statement

The WRU set high safeguarding standards, with a safe recruitment policy and process to be followed, which is robust and the WRU works closely with clubs to ensure that we have safe and inclusive environments in our clubs, hubs and regions.

The WRU are committed to supporting clubs, hubs and regions to develop a safeguarding culture within Welsh Rugby that ensures that we work together to share information, so that we recruit the right people.

Application

The safe recruitment process must include an application for the role. Clubs, Hubs and Regions must ensure that they have an application from prospective volunteers, outlining any previous experience that they have, that is relevant to the role that they are applying for.

Future

Selecting the right people is extremely important, take responsibility to conduct an effective interview for future volunteers. Question and probe appropriately with professional curiosity to ensure that we recruit the right people into the rugby family and minimise the risk of appointing someone unsuitable. It is important to ensure that there is a fair process.

Evaluate

Check things thoroughly such as pre-employment checks and gather information for the suitability risk assessment (this will be required for the DBS check) and link all information.

It is also important to maintain a culture of vigilance and support once the individual has been appointed. It is useful to conduct a Club Induction to outline the responsibilities, expected standards and club culture.

Remember Don't be a Bystander

- Look and Listen.
- Take appropriate action if volunteers or Staff don't comply with the safe recruitment process (Red Flag).
- Duty to children.
- Engagement and Education are key.
- Consequences for victims are life-long.
- Club reputational damage.

Key Points

- It is extremely important that volunteers are appropriately vetted prior to being appointed to a volunteer role in regulated activity.
- The safe recruitment process is managed by the Club Safeguarding Officer. If there is a person who wants to participate as a new volunteer, then they have to complete the process.
- DBS checks for volunteers are free, with no cost to the club or the volunteer.
- Anyone attending the Coach Development Courses will also be required to have a valid DBS certificate, prior to attending.
- If there are coaches who are under 18 years of age, although they may be suitably qualified and vetted, they should not be relied upon to have responsibility for safeguarding issues. They should be allowed to develop their sense of belonging and responsibility rather than depending upon them to take full responsibility for managing a group of children. They can only supplement the adult coaches supervising the activity.

WRU Database

It is important that accurate, reliable and up to date information is retained on the WRU database, both from a safeguarding perspective and to ensure compliance with data protection laws. The database is managed by the Club Secretary with the assistance of other nominated personnel within the club.

The Club Safeguarding Officers and Club Secretary have access to relevant data held by the club, and Team Managers have limited access to their individual teams. They do not have access to edit any information regarding children who are players, as this responsibility sits with the individual parent in line with data protection laws and online registration.

It is the responsibility of the club to ensure that all club volunteers are entered onto the database, and the information is up to date and accurate. Some of those club volunteers will require a DBS check in line with their role in the club and those will also be displayed on the safeguarding tab of the database.

Non-Regulated Activity Roles

There are many other volunteers and parents who may be involved in supporting the running of a rugby squad, and there may be a variety of tasks that volunteers will complete such as administration, collecting subscriptions, registration of players, preparing the field for play or occasionally assisting with transport duties.

In general terms those tasks do not meet the criteria for a DBS check i.e. regulated activity, and therefore they will not have to undertake a DBS check. However, there may be some who do meet this criteria even though the role would not ordinarily require a check (e.g. CSO). If you are in any doubt regarding this, please contact the WRU Safeguarding Team.

If there is a new volunteer who is a Coach, Team Manager, First Aider or Referee, the Club Safeguarding Officer the Team Manager, or Coach should notify the CSO that there is a new coach in the club and the CSO will facilitate the completion of the DBS application. It is important that this is completed as soon as possible. DBS checks are free for volunteers and are completed online.

There is further guidance available for CSOs in relation to the completion of this process and the documents that can be used to verify identity. Please contact the WRU Safeguarding Team if you have any queries

Volunteer and Club, Hub or Region - Safe Recruitment Process

The prospective volunteer has to undertake a suitability risk assessment, prior to being able to work in regulated activity, and it is mandatory that the safe recruitment process is completed. This includes a vetting and selection process, including the requirement to have an enhanced DBS check.

The volunteer will need to provide evidence and confirm their identity, and this is verified by the CSO or another nominated ID Verifier within the club i.e. Club Secretary. The DBS application will be completed by the CSO in company with that volunteer, or the information can be gathered on the ID verification form and processed by the Club Safeguarding Officer at a later stage.

The identity of the volunteer can be verified by using various personal documents such as drivers' licence, passport and utility bill etc.

The DBS application is then processed online, and this is usually completed within 5-7 days.

The WRU will be notified if the DBS certificate is cleared i.e. there are no convictions or information to suggest any risk. The applicant will receive the certificate through the post.

If there is any information on the certificate the WRU are notified by e-mail, as an In Post Notification, but they are not informed of the details of any convictions or information. If this occurs the WRU Safeguarding Manager will contact the CSO and request that a copy of the certificate is shared, and then examined, and risk assessed by the WRU.

It is the responsibility of the volunteer applicant to disclose the DBS certificate to the CSO or the WRU. The CSO can scan, photograph or photocopy the certificate and either e-mail (preferred method) or post it to the WRU Safeguarding Team for the full risk assessment to be completed.

If the volunteer does not wish to disclose the contents of the DBS certificate to the CSO then the certificate should be placed in a sealed envelope and given to the CSO, who should then post it to the WRU.

Once the risk assessment is completed and the disclosure is cleared, the WRU will update the DBS certificate number and date of issue onto the WRU database to reflect DBS compliance for that volunteer. The CSO will then be notified of this by e-mail. Only once the CSO has been informed of this clearance can the volunteer work in regulated activity with children in the club.

The CSO would be the only person in the club to have access as an ID verifier to complete online applications, but they cannot verify their own identity, or close family members. Therefore, the ID verification process would have to be completed either by a nominated officer of the club or by a WRU staff member. This is generally completed by the WRU Safeguarding Manager during the CSO induction process.

It is the responsibility of the club to ensure that all volunteers in regulated activity are appropriately registered, so that the DBS certificate details are updated.

If there is information contained on the DBS certificate that indicates that the volunteer may pose a risk to children or adults then the matter will be investigated further, with the volunteer being asked to supply further information regarding the conviction(s).

The volunteer is required to provide a letter of explanation regarding the convictions that indicate that a risk may be presented. The volunteer will also be required to provide two independent references. This will be done as confidentially as possible between the WRU Safeguarding Manager, the individual, and the CSO.

It is important that the volunteer provides accurate, detailed and reliable information regarding their convictions, so that the appropriate risk assessment can be conducted. If there is any suggestion that all of the relevant information has not been disclosed, this will be considered in any decisions taken regarding their suitability to work with children and would be considered a breach of the Safeguarding Policy and Procedures.

Once the information has been gathered, if it is necessary and proportionate to do so, further enquiries will be made with statutory agencies such as the Police so that all the relevant information can be assessed.

The matter will be considered by the WRU Safeguarding Panel who will decide upon the suitability of the volunteer to be involved in a position of regulated activity. If it is believed that temporary safeguarding measures need to be in place to mitigate the risk while the investigation is progressing, then a temporary suspension can be imposed by the panel.

There are two potential outcomes to this process in relation to the decision of the WRU Safeguarding Panel:

- The suitability risk assessment will be completed, and the disclosure cleared through the safe recruitment process, to enable the volunteer or member of staff to volunteer or work in regulated activity OR
- The panel consider that the individual does pose a risk and would therefore be excluded from working or volunteering with children

Frequency of DBS Checks and Vetting

DBS certificates should be renewed every three years, or there is a change in role or responsibility. Volunteers that have been convicted of any criminal offences during that time whilst still involved in regulated activity have a duty to self-disclose this information to the CSO and the WRU Safeguarding Manager for a further risk assessment to be conducted.

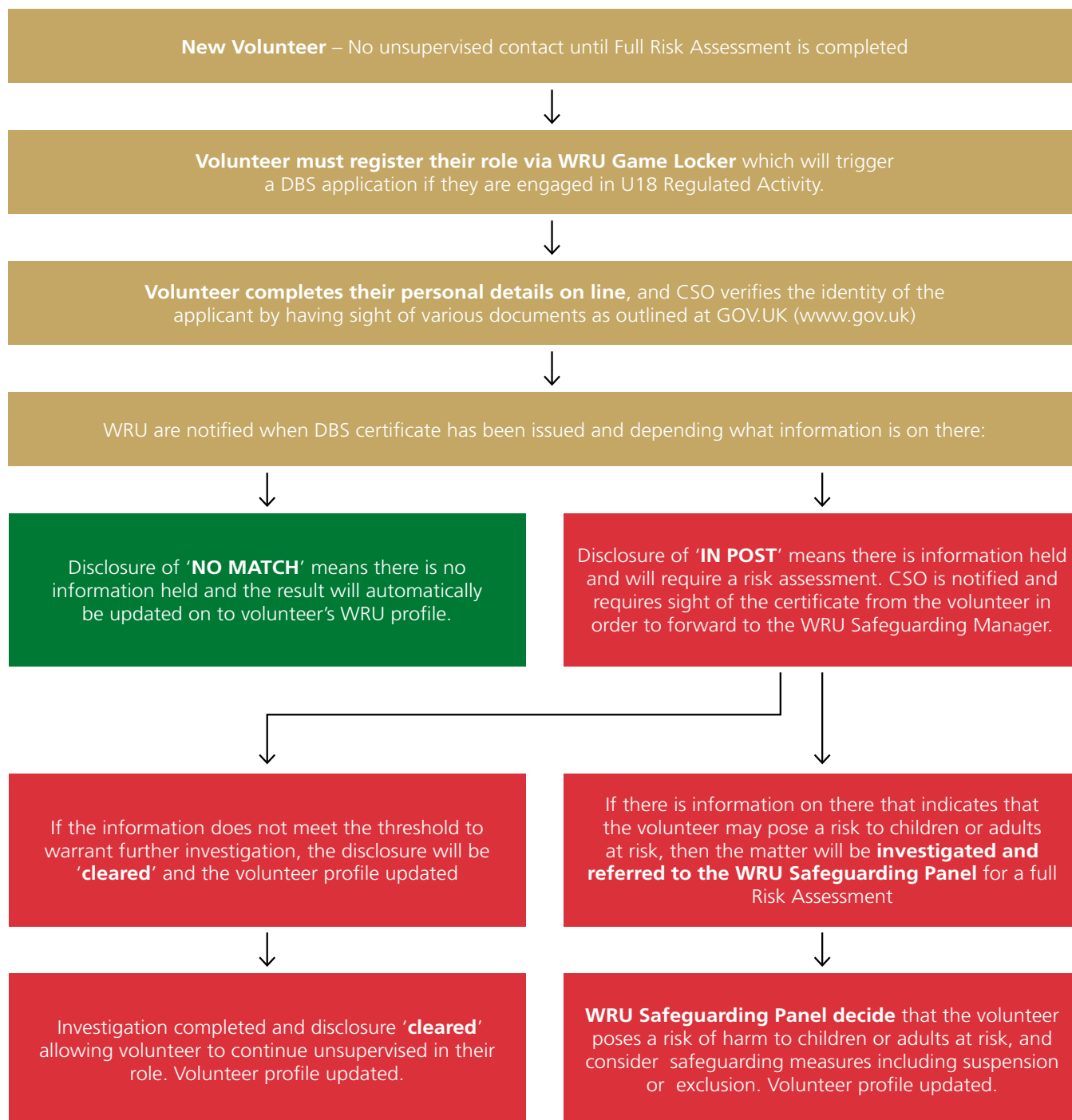
Failure to disclose such information will lead to the matter being referred to the WRU Safeguarding Panel to consider if any further action should be taken.

DBS ID Checking Guidelines

The current guidelines are on the DBS website [link below]

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dbs-identity-checking-guidelines>

VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT RISK MANAGEMENT FLOWCHART



POSITION OF TRUST

What is a Position of Trust?

Someone in a position of trust is a person in a position of authority or responsibility over another person.

Position of Trust is a legal term that refers to certain roles and settings where an adult has regular and direct contact with children.

The age of sexual consent in the UK is 16 years of age. The law states (as of 28 June 2022) that those in a position of trust cannot legally have a sexual relationship with young people they look after, under 18 years old, and this includes Sports Coaches.

'Sport' is defined as:

1. any game in which physical skill is the predominant factor, and
2. any form of physical recreation that is also engaged in for purposes of competition or display.

The adult must be involved in coaching, teaching, training, supervising, or instructing a young person.

There is a requirement that this activity is carried out on a regular basis (Regulated Activity)

What is Good Practice?

Coaches and members of the wider coaching team involved in physical activity and sports organisations should be aware of and recognise the boundaries of what acceptable and unacceptable behaviours and situations involving those in a position of trust.

Coaches sign up to the Code of Conduct when they register on Game Locker.

Coaches must:

- maintain a positive, healthy relationship with the young people under your authority.
- maintain a relationship with all participants that is appropriate to your role.
- not seek to engage in sexual activity or sexualised communication or image-sharing (including via social media) with participants under 18 years old.

Coaches Code of Practice

Coaching is a powerful catalyst for promoting positive behaviour within any sport. Coaches have a pivotal role in creating and shaping team culture and directly contribute to the enjoyment, fulfilment and achievement of those they coach.

Working with and for people is central to the effectiveness of a coach, to develop and build positive relationships with others. Coaches have a responsibility to lead and develop a positive optimal culture, that reflects the values of their club and Welsh Rugby, and ensures that everyone thrives, and is able to reach their potential.

Coaches must be qualified, vetted and competent, and those working with children in regulated activity also have a higher responsibility, being in a Position of Trust - a position of authority or responsibility over another.

The WRU Coaches Code of Practice outline the standards of ethical and professional behaviour that are expected and required from a Coach. The WRU Coaches Code of Conduct is aligned alongside the Code of Practice, to assist coaches in developing the key principles of good coaching practice. It has been developed to help provide clarity of what good practice looks and feels like in terms of coaching behaviours. It will also summarise what poor practice looks and feels like.

Abuse of a Position of Trust

The [Child Protection in Sport Unit](#) have developed a series of resources on this subject – 'Understanding the Implications of Positions of Trust in Sport'.

The primary motivation for legislation to address the abuse of positions of trust was the need to protect young people aged 16 and 17 who, despite reaching the age of consent for sexual activity, are considered to be vulnerable to sexual abuse and exploitation, in defined circumstances.

This includes sexual activity and relationships with adults who hold a position of trust, responsibility or authority in relation to them and, as a result, have a considerable amount of power and influence in their lives.

The WRU will investigate any allegations and will work in collaboration with statutory agencies to investigate any potential criminal offences that may have been committed, and as such any person in a position of trust who abuses this position will also breach the WRU Codes of Conduct and the WRU Safeguarding Policy. The matter will be referred to the WRU Safeguarding Panel to consider what safeguarding measures need to be implemented and this can include permanent suspension from coaching, and a referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service to consider barring from working with children.

It must be stressed that it is always the responsibility of the adult to ensure that his or her conduct is acceptable. Appropriate boundaries in all relationships must be maintained and adults must not behave in a manner that would encourage any attraction to develop.

However, in the event that a young person displays signs of attraction to an adult in a position of trust, this must be reported to the Club Safeguarding Officer. If appropriate, the adult may need to remove themselves from this situation.

Safeguarding Children and Young People in the Community Game

The Welsh Rugby Union are committed to promoting positive, inclusive, and safe environments, and working with parents and volunteers to ensure we create a culture in which all children and young people, are able to learn, develop, and have fun through their rugby journey.

It is important that everyone involved in Welsh rugby (i.e. volunteers, coaches, parents, carers) understand their safeguarding responsibilities in relation to all the people they interact with in the rugby environment.

Coaches should create a positive, and supportive environment, so that children and young people have the opportunity to develop a range of life skills. When they are able to participate in rugby within a safe environment, they develop life skills alongside their rugby development. These skills then help them to positively contribute to society in the future, develop a love of the sport whilst also improving their physical well-being by engaging in a healthy active lifestyle.

COACH

- **Care** about What You do
- **Organisation** – Detail is Important in Everything that You do
- **Application** – Develop an Engaging, Safe and Inclusive Environment
- **Communication** - Alignment and the Whole One Club Approach - What is the Club, Hub or Regional Culture?
- **High Standards** - On and Off the Field



Managing Parents and Players Expectations

When players enter the performance pathway it is important that the expectations of players, parents and guardians are appropriately managed. There should be a clear policy in place as to how they will be managed.

Players who enter the performance pathway should receive an induction where they are briefed on what the expectations on them are, and parents and guardians should also be aware of this. The induction should also include information on selection, training, competitions, anti-doping, diet, role of sports agents, reporting concerns and safeguarding issues and other player welfare related education.

There should be regular performance reviews conducted and appropriate and relevant feedback provided at every opportunity.

It is extremely important that players who are released from the performance pathway programme are managed appropriately upon their exit. Players and parents should be provided with specific feedback and should be supported through this process along with their parents, to ensure that they are encouraged to continue playing rugby and are retained and transitioned into the community game.

Safeguarding Talented Young Athletes and the Pathway Process

There are different challenges presented for young players in a performance environment or talent pathway, and issues such as overtraining, managing injuries, social media, doping, diet, bullying and managing relationships all have the potential to raise safeguarding issues.

No young person starts off as an elite athlete – they must grow in experience, skill and confidence with the support of their coach and others.

For many young people, reaching a representative level has been their focus for a number of years, and they will have trained hard to achieve this. Parents will also have made a significant contribution to support their child's progress and success. Within competitive sport, too much early pressure can lead to burn-out and withdrawal from participating in sport.

The WRU are committed to working with staff that are involved in managing the performance pathway or similar programmes to ensure that they understand their safeguarding responsibilities, through being in a player centred, safe and positive environment for those young players to develop and thrive. Responsibility for creating a safe, player-focused environment lies with the coaching and management staff, and ultimately the Regions and the WRU.

The staff who manage and coach talented young players in pathway programmes are in a position of trust, and they have to understand the role and the responsibilities that are attached to this.

They have a responsibility to ensure that children who are identified as elite young players are appropriately safeguarded. Those young players involved in such programmes often have to work under intense pressure, in close relationships with coaches and support teams, and safeguarding issues can arise.

There are factors that can make some talented young players more vulnerable to harmful behaviours, either from themselves, their coaches or parents, or members of their entourage.

These factors include:

- a win at all costs approach.
- intense coach – player relationships,
- a self-image that is linked closely with performance excellence.
- child athletes operating in an adult-focused environment.
- being away from family and support networks.
- fear of losing funding or a place on the programme if they speak out.

These demands on the talents and time of a young person can have negative consequences on their ability to socialise with those outside the rugby environment and denial of other peer opportunities and friendships.

Training and Competition

Potentially abusive situations can arise when a high-performance coach develops training programmes and attendance at competition schedules that are focused on the goals of the sport to achieve success rather than the needs of the young person, and talented young players are vulnerable in these circumstances.

Players should be treated as an individual, and training programmes tailored to their particular development needs. It is important that those managing such programmes understand and know their players well and focus on developing the person as well as the athlete and player. They need to have empathy and manage workloads and expectations effectively.

Coaches planning training routines should consider the development of a young person as a whole to maximise their development and potential. Some key factors to consider as a coach are:

How well do you know your players? Can you read if they are having a good or bad day and flex your session to meet their needs.

- Where are they currently in relation to their goals?
- Rates of development are different and needs to be acknowledged when planning any sessions.
- Are the sessions challenging or not challenging enough? The aim is to find the sweet spot.
- Are we providing a psychologically safe environment? Do players feel comfortable to be themselves and push themselves without fear of failure.
- The vulnerability of young people participating in elite-level sport.
- The impact that elite-level sport may be having on the child's development.

Rugby Union is a sport that has physical requirements. Added to this, as a young player progresses through the pathway the level of physicality in games increases. However, too much emphasis on physical conditioning within any session will have a negative impact on a child's social and physiological development.

Potentially abusive situations can arise when a coach develops training programmes and competition schedules that are focused on the goals of the sport rather than the needs of the young person.

This may include:

- a training schedule that requires travelling long distances.
- the frequency of the training, what times training occurs and length of training sessions.
- representing the sport in regional or district competitions balanced with club or school commitments.
- being forced to play above their age group.

Managing Player Demand

Young players who progress through the pathway will have heightened demand on their playing and training time. It is essential that all stakeholders plan and manage this accordingly. This is due to the fact that a young player competing in too many games and tournaments that are close together, or being exposed to excessive training requirements, can be at a physical risk because of a shortened recovery time.

These situations need to be managed effectively and ensure that the demand upon the child both physically and mentally is not excessive.

It is important that players workloads are appropriately managed, and they have time to train and not just compete. It is the responsibility of those adults who have a duty of care to the child to ensure that there are sufficient periods of rest to enable recovery, regeneration and growth.

As talented young players progress through the pathway strength and conditioning training becomes more prevalent, the welfare of the individual must be the primary focus. There is a need to development their strength and conditioning to equip them with the physical attributes for the modern game at the elite level. However, strength and conditioning should not be viewed as simply an addition to an overall training and competition programme for a child, but rather as a key factor in long-term athletic development.

The Regional Age Grade programme will very often see players playing above their age group, and similarly players in the Regional Academies may also be required to play in senior rugby prior to their eighteenth birthday. The Coaching Staff will conduct an assessment based on the player's maturity in terms of their physical and cognitive development.

Academy players who are considered to play in senior rugby will also be subject to this process, and there is also a need for agreement between the Academy Manager, parents and player. It is important that collective decisions are made in the best interests of the athlete with his/her welfare and development being the paramount consideration.

The demands on a young person can have negative consequences on their ability to socialise outside of the rugby environment and leave little time for other peer opportunities and friendships, so it is extremely important to consider it as the development of not only a player and athlete, but also as a person. There is a need to have a holistic approach to developing young athletes, as investment in the person will benefit their overall player development, and ability to perform in a team environment.

Managing Relationships and Boundaries

Coaches are in a position of trust, and due to the culture of sport, this may create a situation where the coach is allowed to facilitate power, obedience and potentially the rationalisation of abuse which can be more prevalent at the elite level. This abuse can take the form of inappropriate relationships or even illegal sexual contact.

Elite athletes spend a significant amount of time alone with their coach who is often involved in other areas of the athlete's life as well.

In a performance environment it is extremely important that coaches are appropriately qualified and experienced in managing the unique challenges and vulnerabilities associated with safeguarding elite young athletes and understanding the importance of a player-focused environment.

Staff who are working with children in a performance environment must also be appropriately qualified, vetted and competent.

Coaches need to ensure that personal behavioural boundaries are not crossed. Examples of this include unsupervised social outings, inappropriate social media contact, the use of inappropriate messaging or sharing inappropriate photographs on social media, inappropriate conversations in person or via phone and highly personal conversations that were irrelevant to the athlete's participation in sport. These activities can present a safeguarding risk.

Regional Age Grade and Academy Coaches need to ensure that they fully understand their responsibilities and manage those boundaries effectively. They need to be able to drive high standards of behaviour and performance within the elite pathway environment. It is important to understand the needs of the players, and also manage their workload appropriately.

Regular dialogue with the players and parents is key to building relationships. Coaches should provide feedback to players on a regular basis to drive and improve their performance. However, it is equally important that these open and honest discussions are conducted in the right manner, with the interests of the player the primary concern.

Coaches also need to understand how injuries, and particularly long-term injury can affect players mental well-being. For young athletes this can be viewed as a real issue and can have serious consequences. Many suffer anxiety, as they know that they are competing for places and looking to secure a contract. Parents and Academy Staff have a critical role in supporting players as many will feel isolated in this situation.

Players also need to be managed effectively when returning to play after injury, and coaches need to be aware of the balance of power in situations such as this. It should be a collective

Doping

Doping within Welsh Rugby is also a safeguarding and child protection issue if it involves children or young people. It is important to identify high risk players and situations and pro-actively work with the WRU Integrity Team to raise awareness of these issues.

The WRU work closely with UK Anti-Doping to educate players, coaches, support staff, medical teams and also importantly parents and guardians to have a basic level of understanding about anti-doping, in terms of both performance enhancing and recreational drugs. This is promoted through the 'STAY ONSIDE' programme.

The WRU has a comprehensive anti-doping education programme for those players on the performance pathway. These players will be provided with the appropriate advice, guidance and education around nutrition and the use of supplements and managing any medications through the use of the Global Drugs Reference Online tool.

The WRU advocate a 'food first' approach, and a focus on players getting their daily eating right to improve performance and reach their goals. To maximise their athletic potential, players should ensure that they have a solid foundation to underpin this through the Six Pillars:

- Healthy and balanced diet.
- Good hydration habits.
- Effective injury prevention strategies.
- Appropriate rest and recovery.
- Mental focus skills.
- Effective training programme.

In terms of diet, it is vitally important that there is clear messaging from performance staff around what is acceptable and what is unacceptable. Messages and conversations around issues such as weight gain or loss needs to be appropriately managed through professional nutritional guidance. It is not acceptable to apply or exert pressure on elite young athletes about such issues, as this can very often lead to unacceptable practice or even a risk of doping.

Please see the [WRU Anti-Doping Protocol and Guidance](https://community.wru.wales/governance/policy-and-integrity/anti-doping/) for further information

<https://community.wru.wales/governance/policy-and-integrity/anti-doping/>



What can Players do to Safeguard Themselves?

All players have the right to enjoy sport, free from all forms of abuse and exploitation, and to be involved in decisions affecting them.

There are lots of things that players can do, and be involved in, to help promote their own welfare and safety. These include:

- Know their rights and responsibilities.
- Athletes will have responsibilities to comply with the WRU Code of Conduct, and also those related to specific areas such as anti-doping. Athletes' rights and options should be made clear to them.
- Be familiar with the WRU Safeguarding Policy and Procedures and Coaches Code of Practice.
- These resources will have information about what players can expect the organisation to do to look after their well-being, and what is expected of the individual and other people such as parents and coaches.
- Know how to raise any concerns.
- It's important that athletes can talk to someone they trust if they have concerns about anything that might be happening to them, or anyone else, in or outside of their sport, this could include abuse, harassment and bullying.
- Players should also consider what support systems are in place among and beyond their entourage members (family, friends, teachers and/or coaches).
- Ask for support as they transition through the system.
- Transitions can involve entering top-level sport, moving from junior to senior ranks, deselection, appeals, and leaving top-level sport.
- Transitions can be really hard; support should be provided to help players navigate through the process. There should be inductions that provide information about how the system operates and what support is available. This should be part of a continuous conversation about the individual's sport and life after top-level sport.
- Seek opportunities to become a voice for player welfare.
- Look for opportunities to get involved and become a voice in decision-making about player welfare and protection. The WRU have mechanisms in place to consult children, young people and parents as part of their reviews of safeguarding policies and practices.
- Support their peers.
- Supporting peers by encouraging and helping them to speak out if they witness or have any concerns about their own or anyone else's welfare.

Bullying

The WRU are committed to supporting clubs in dealing with bullying issues through appropriate advice and guidance but believe that swift local resolution is the most effective approach in dealing with such matters. The matter should be reported to the WRU but must be investigated and managed by the club, and if appropriate dealt with as an internal matter, unless the concern reaches the threshold for statutory agency intervention.

The damage inflicted by bullying can frequently be underestimated. It can cause considerable distress to children and adults at risk, to the extent that it affects their health and development or, at the extreme, cause them significant harm (including self-harm).

The Department for Children, Schools and Families says bullying is:

‘Behaviour by an individual or group usually repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally’.

Whether it be in a domestic environment, school or workplace or sports setting bullying can be–

- Physical – hitting, kicking, pushing, pinching, unwanted physical contact and taking things.
- Verbal – name calling, racial taunts, sexual comments, making offensive remarks, sarcasm, persistent teasing and emotional torment through ridicule, humiliation.
- Indirect – spreading rumours, excluding from social groups, sending malicious text messages, posting of derogatory or abusive comments, graffiti, videos or images on social network sites.
- Discriminatory behaviour or prejudicial attitudes.

There are a number of signs that may indicate that a young person or adult at risk is being bullied:

- Behavioural changes such as reduced concentration and/or becoming withdrawn, clingy, depressed, tearful, emotionally up and down, reluctance to go to training or sports clubs.
- A drop off in the performance or standard of play.
- Physical signs such as stomach aches, headaches, difficulty in sleeping, bed wetting, scratching and bruising, damaged clothes and bingeing for example on food, cigarettes or alcohol..
- A shortage of money or frequent loss of possessions.

Although anyone can be the target of bullying, victims are typically shy, sensitive and perhaps anxious or insecure. Sometimes they are singled out for physical reasons – being overweight, physically small, having a disability or belonging to a different race, faith or culture, where it is difficult for those bullied to defend themselves.

People who bully others behave like this for a variety of different reasons and may in some cases have been abused. Typically, bullies can have low self-esteem, be excitable, aggressive and jealous. Crucially, they have learned how to gain power over others and there is increasing evidence to suggest that this abuse of power can lead to crime.

All forms of bullying are unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Bullying can include online as well as offline behaviour. The provision of an open environment where people are encouraged to report any bullying concerns is vital in tackling this problem.

People who have been bullied will often benefit from ongoing support to deal with the impact. As well as support from the CSO, victims of bullying can benefit from peer support. It is important that parents/carers are involved as they are likely to be a key source of support. The

club may consider holding a reconciliation meeting to help address the issues between the bully and the bullied person.

The competitive nature of sport makes it an ideal environment for the bully, and these are some examples:

- A parent who pushes too hard.
- A coach who adopts a win-at-all-costs philosophy.
- A player who intimidates inappropriately.
- An official who places unfair pressure on a person.

Anti-Bullying Policy

The club or organisation will:

- Recognise its duty of care and responsibility to safeguard all participants from harm.
- Promote and implement an anti-bullying policy in addition to the WRU Safeguarding Policy and procedures.
- Seek to ensure that bullying behaviour is not accepted or condoned and take any allegations seriously.
- Require all members of the club/organisation to be given information about, and sign up to, the anti-bullying policy.
- Take action to investigate and respond to any alleged incidents of bullying.
- Encourage and facilitate people to play an active part in developing and adopting a code of conduct to address bullying.
- Ensure that coaches are given access to information, guidance and/or training on bullying.

Each participant, coach, volunteer and official will:

- Respect every child and adults at risk's need for, and rights to a safe and positive environment where security, praise, recognition and opportunity for taking responsibility are available.
- Respect the feelings and views of others.
- Recognise that everyone is important and that our differences make each of us special and should be valued.
- Ensure safety by having rules and practices carefully explained and displayed for all to see.
- Report incidents of bullying they see – by doing nothing you are condoning it.

Responding to an allegation of bullying:

- Take all allegations of bullying very seriously and make a commitment to address those issues.
- Support the person and encourage them to speak about their concerns and tell the person in charge or someone in authority.
- Establish what they want from the investigation.
- Investigate all allegations and take action to ensure the victim is safe.

- Speak with the victim and the bully separately.
- Reassure the victim that you can be trusted and will help them, although you cannot promise total confidentiality.
- Keep records of what is said (what happened, by whom, when)
- Talk to the victim's parents.
- Report any concerns to the Club Safeguarding Officer.

Hazing, Initiation and Ceremonies

Hazing refers to any activity expected of someone on joining a group, or maintaining status in a group, that humiliates, degrades or risks emotional and/or physical harm, regardless of the person's willingness to participate. Hazing is known to exist in schools, universities and in sports environments. In a rugby environment these are often referred to as initiation ceremonies.

Clubs, Hubs and Regions need to be aware it, and agree on standards of behaviour with players, volunteers and staff. It is important that everyone understands and agree on what is appropriate and inappropriate behaviour, in their particular environment, as this will vary between groups. Typical hazing activities include sleep deprivation, personal servitude, binge drinking, being forced to wear embarrassing attire, and carry out dangerous stunts.

These are issues that should generally be managed by the club, hub, region or other bodies such as universities and schools. However in the most serious cases, where there is a concern that reaches the threshold for statutory agency intervention it may result in the WRU working with partners to investigate the matter as a safeguarding concern.

Online, E-Communication and Bullying

Children and young people may become targets of online bullying. Like other forms of bullying, this can seriously impact on the health, well-being, and self-confidence of those targeted. It may have a significant impact not only on the person being bullied, but on their home and work life too.

Children and young people should take steps to ensure their personal information is safe and secure. This can be managed effectively by regularly reviewing their online privacy settings and only share information with friends known to them.

Everyone should respect the feelings of others online. They should never post personal information, including pictures, about others without consent. They should not forward online content to others where it might be upsetting, hurtful or embarrassing. If they are asked to remove information that they have posted, they should do so.

Children and young people also need to recognise how they may become part of the abuse and may escalate the problem by 'liking' comments made, or taking sides when there are disputes which may lead to bullying online. It is important to respect other people's privacy and ensure that you don't become part of the problem as a member of the bullying group.

Everyone should take action and be responsible in order to prevent online harassment, abuse and bullying of others. There are strategies that can be employed to stop the bully contacting you on social networks, mobile phones, instant messaging and even games consoles. As

mentioned previously it is important that people check out the privacy or safety settings of the service you are using. You can also ring up your service provider or network provider who can help you block the abuse.

Make sure that for any account you have, you have a password that you don't share with anyone. This will mean people can't access your account and steal any information, pictures or personal data or pretend to be you. Change your password regularly.

If there is an issue in relation to online bullying, it is important to ensure that you keep the evidence by saving or copying any abusive texts or conversations, to assist in investigating any such issues.

Children and young people should remember that when accepting someone as a friend on instant messaging or social networks, that person can then access information and pictures they have posted so they should ensure they are happy for them to see this information before accepting or adding them.

Any online bullying should be reported to an adult that you trust. It may be abusive or threatening comments, a text message, online chats or group bullying, it is still bullying and is not acceptable. It is important to support people who are being bullied.

If you have blocked the person but it is still continuing, all social networks have report abuse buttons, as do most mobile phone networks who have teams to deal with abuse. Games consoles also have advice on their websites. All service providers have a duty to make sure their users feel safe.

Don't reply or answer back, and don't become a cyber-bully yourself, deal with the bully by blocking and reporting the abuse. It is sometimes hard not to write back, but it is always best to ignore, block and monitor the situation.

Check the privacy settings which will allow you to choose what information you share with people. Don't ever share where you live, your telephone number or email address with online friends.

Discriminatory Language and Behaviour

Discrimination exists within sport, some of it in plain sight. There needs to be a safe and inclusive environment which in turn will develop a positive inclusive culture within rugby union in Wales, to ensure that participants will not be discriminated against. It is clear within society, as well as sport, that some kinds of discrimination have greater consequences than others.

The WRU are clear that all forms of discrimination are not acceptable, and contrary to the values of Welsh Rugby.

The competitive nature of sport makes it an ideal environment for bullying; however, rugby union has a great reputation as a team sport with strong values and it is vitally important that there is a zero-tolerance approach to bullying. We all have a responsibility to stamp out discriminatory behaviours, practices and cultures.

It is crucial to understand the damage language and words can do to a person. In sport there are various levels of 'banter' which can go from mild to harsh, but for clarity it is not on the same scale as bullying.

Banter is something that most teams engage in; bullying is not. Banter is a form of gentle ribbing by friends, colleagues and teammates; it is episodic (i.e. irregular), never intended to cause harm and, importantly, reciprocal.

Bullying, by contrast, is subtly relentless, intentionally wounding and one directional. Banter can never be used as an excuse for bullying behaviour, and it is important to recognise that for some, banter is a route into bullying. Therefore, boundaries need to be set and upheld. While there is greater understanding of this than previously, the system is far from perfect.

WRU EDI Policy which can be accessed on the WRU website.

Child Sexual Exploitation (Grooming)

The majority of adults working with children in rugby are committed to providing an enjoyable and safe environment in which to participate. However, there may be a small proportion who have ulterior motives.

Sexual abuse of children is the result of premeditated actions that are carefully planned. Sections 14 and 15 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003 relate to offences of grooming children with the intention to commit a sexual offence. The dictionary definition of grooming is 'the criminal activity of becoming friends with a child, especially over the internet, in order to try to persuade the child to have a sexual relationship with you'.

Child sexual exploitation (CSE) is a form of sexual abuse that involves the manipulation and/or coercion of young people under the age of 18 into sexual activity in exchange for things such as money, gifts, accommodation, affection or status.

The manipulation or 'grooming' process involves befriending children and gaining their trust, often providing them with drugs and alcohol, sometimes over a long period of time, before the abuse begins. The abusive relationship between victim and perpetrator involves an imbalance of power which limits the victim's options.

It is a form of abuse which is often misunderstood by victims and outsiders as consensual. Although it is true that the victim can be tricked into believing they are in a loving relationship, no child under the age of 18 can ever consent to being abused or exploited.

Child sexual exploitation can manifest itself in different ways. It can involve an older perpetrator exercising financial, emotional or physical control over a young person. It can involve peers manipulating or forcing victims into sexual activity, sometimes within gangs and in gang-affected neighbourhoods, but not always. Exploitation can also involve opportunistic or organised networks of perpetrators who may profit financially from trafficking young victims between different locations to engage in sexual activity with multiple men.

It is important to understand how an abuser can 'groom' a club or parents or a child by appearing trustworthy and helpful, therefore giving the impression that they can take responsibility for a young person(s).

Research demonstrates that a child is likely to be abused by someone they know and who is likely to be in a position of trust with a child.

Technology is widely used by perpetrators as a method of grooming and coercing victims, often through social networking sites and mobile devices. This form of abuse usually occurs in private, or in semi-public places such as parks, cinemas, cafes and hotels.

Sexual exploitation in sport can very often be developed over a period of time, where adult volunteers who have influence over children that they coach or manage, groom them with the intention of committing a sexual offence. It is important that adult volunteers develop healthy, transparent and positive relationships with children and that they do not put themselves in a position where they may be compromised.

Recognising Poor Practice and Abuse

Even for those experienced in working with child abuse, it is not always easy to recognise a situation where abuse may occur or has already taken place. Staff and volunteers in sport, are not experts at such recognition. However, they do have responsibility to act if they have any concerns about the behaviour of someone.

The WRU encourage employees and volunteers to report any concerns that they have to the Club Safeguarding Officer or directly to the WRU Safeguarding Team. If there is a serious concern that a child may be at immediate risk, then the matter should be reported directly to the Police.

It is not the responsibility of staff, coaches or volunteers to decide whether or not abuse is occurring. Their role is to follow procedures and forward any information or concerns to the appropriate contact, who will then deal with the other agencies involved to determine whether abuse has taken place i.e. Social Services or Police.

The Welsh Rugby Union are committed to ensuring that children and young people have the opportunity to develop in such an environment. We have a proactive safeguarding approach that aims to develop and evolve our strategies and continually drive standards to protect children and young people involved in Welsh rugby.

However, if incidents of abuse are reported, the Welsh Rugby Union are also committed to supporting children and young people, and families to ensure that any investigations are conducted in a professional and expeditious manner.

The sustained abuse of children physically, emotionally, sexually or through neglect can have major long-term effects on all aspects of a child's health, development and well-being. Sustained abuse is likely to have a deep impact on the child's self-image and self-esteem, and on their future life. Difficulties may extend into adulthood: the experience of long-term abuse may lead to difficulties in forming or sustaining close relationships, establishing oneself in the workforce, and to extra difficulties in developing the attitudes and skills needed to be an effective parent.

Any potentially abusive incident has to be seen in context to assess the extent of harm to a child and appropriate intervention. Often, it is the interaction between a number of factors that serve to increase the likelihood or level of actual significant harm.

For every child and family, there may be factors that aggravate the harm caused to the child, and those that protect against harm. Relevant factors include the individual child's means of coping and adapting, support from a family and social network, and the impact of any interventions.

The effects on a child are also influenced by the quality of the family environment at the time of abuse, and subsequent life events. An important point, sometimes overlooked, is that the way in which professionals respond has a significant bearing on subsequent outcomes.

It is important that children feel confident about their involvement in rugby and have the opportunity to enhance and develop their skills and abilities not only as an athlete but also as a person. It is equally important that sports organisations are able to gain the trust of parents and guardians in knowing that their children are involved in a safe and positive sporting environment.

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child.

Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces illness in a child. The following are examples of physical abuse in a rugby environment relate to Coaches, Managers or other volunteers:

- exposing young players to exercise or training which disregards the capacity of their immature and growing body.
- exposing young players to overplaying, over training or fatigue.
- exposing young players to alcohol, or giving them the opportunity to drink alcohol below the legal age.
- exposing young players to performance enhancing drugs and recommending that they take them.
- exposing young players to recreational drugs.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate or valued only in so far as they meet the needs of another person. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond the child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction.

It may involve causing a child to frequently feel frightened or in danger, for example by witnessing domestic abuse within the home or being bullied, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill treatment of a child, though it may also occur on its own.

The following are examples of emotional abuse in a rugby environment:

- Humiliating children or doing so in front of others.
- Providing repeated unbalanced negative feedback.
- Repeatedly ignoring a young player's efforts to progress.
- Repeatedly demanding performance levels above those of which the young player is capable.
- Over emphasis on winning and not enough on development.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, including prostitution, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative or non-penetrative acts.

They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways. The following are examples of how sexual abuse can manifest itself within a rugby environment:

- Developing or encouraging inappropriate relationships between adults and children.
- Inappropriate use of social media by grooming children.
- Inappropriate touching of children.
- The close proximity of coaches and others, to young people provides opportunities for potential abusers to exploit their position of trust to sexually abuse.

Neglect

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may also occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse.

Neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food and clothing, shelter including exclusion from home or abandonment. It may also include the failure to protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger, failure to ensure adequate supervision, or the failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs. In a rugby situation neglect may occur when:

- young players are left alone without proper supervision.
- young players are exposed to unnecessary heat or cold without fluids or protection.
- young players are exposed to an unacceptable risk of injury.

Effects of Abuse

- Low self-esteem
- Developmental delay – physical, emotionally and mentally.
- School related problems.
- Difficulty in forming relationships as adults.
- Behavioural difficulties, such as aggression or anger.
- Permanent or temporary injury.
- Pain or distress.
- Sometimes, if untreated, abusive relationships with own (or other) children.
- Depression, self-harm – sometimes leading to suicide.
- Fatality.

Factors that increase the likelihood of Risk

- Young children that may have difficulty in telling others.
- Disabled children who may have difficulty communicating or accessing others to tell.
- Children who have already experienced abuse.
- Poor relationship between children and parent/carer.
- High levels of stress.
- History of violence in the family.
- A high dependency on the coach for sporting success.

Indicators of Abuse

Children and young people are unlikely to reveal that they are being abused. This is why it is essential that all recognise signs or symptoms of abuse taking place. However, symptoms can be the result of a combination of different types of abuse that is occurring. The following highlights examples of signs of child abuse, however this list is not exhaustive:

Physical Signs of Neglect

- Hunger- sometimes begging or stealing food from other children or searching through waste or bins.
- Clothing- Inappropriately dressed.
- Appearance- Unkempt, dirty or smelling.
- Loss of weight or constantly underweight.
- Regularly looking tired or uncared for.

Behavioural Signs of Neglect

- Regularly on their own or may have few friends.
- Regularly feeling tired.
- Failing to attend hospital or medical appointments.
- Left alone and unsupervised on a regular basis.
- Regularly late for school or absent from school.

Signs of Physical Abuse

- Unexplained bruising, marks or injuries.
- Bruises which indicate 'hand marks'.
- Cigarette burns.
- Bite marks.
- Broken bones.
- Scalds.

Behavioural Signs of Physical Abuse

- Fear of parent being contacted.
- Aggressive or angry outbursts.
- Running away.
- Fear of going home.
- Flinching.
- Depression.
- Keeping bruises or marks covered.
- Reluctance to change clothes.
- Withdrawn and/or remote behaviour.

Physical Signs of Sexual Abuse

- Bruising or bleeding near the genital area.
- Pain or itching in the genital area.
- Having a sexually transmitted disease.
- Vaginal discharge or infection.
- Stomach pains.
- Discomfort when walking or sitting down.
- Pregnancy.

Behavioural Signs of Sexual Abuse

- Sudden or unexplained changes in behaviour.
- Running away from home.
- Sexualised behaviour (knowledge beyond their age/ development).
- Self-harming.
- Keeping secrets.
- Abusing substances, alcohol or drugs.
- Unexplained source of money.
- Diet problems.
- Fear of someone.
- Not being allowed to have friends.

**These indicators should be considered as part of a pattern of behaviour (in isolation there may be explanations for each)*

Physical Signs of Emotional Abuse

- Failure to thrive or grow, particularly if the child puts weight on in other circumstances..
- Speech disorder.
- Developmental delay in relation to emotional or physical progress.

Behavioural Signs of Emotional Abuse

- Fear of making mistakes.
- Speech disorder.
- Fear of parents or other adults being contacted.
- Self-harm.
- Unwilling to take part in activities or get involved with others.

Physical Signs of Bullying

- Short of money.
- Damaged clothes.
- Loss of possessions.
- Regularly tired.
- Stomach aches or headaches.
- Visible bruising, marks or injuries.

Behavioural Signs of Bullying

- Withdrawn or depressed..
- Insecure
- Struggles to concentrate.
- Reluctance to attend school or training.
- Fear or avoidance of a particular individual or group.
- Mood changes.
- Drop in performance at school or sport.

Identifying Significant Harm

The Children Act 1989 introduced the concept of significant harm as the threshold that justifies compulsory intervention in family life in order to protect children. Significant harm is defined in the legislation as ill treatment or the impairment of health and development. It describes the effects of sexual, physical and emotional abuse or neglect, or a combination of different types.

Local authorities have a statutory duty under the Children Act 1989 to make enquiries, or cause enquiries to be made, where they have reasonable cause to suspect that a child who lives, or is found in their area is suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm.

There are no absolute criteria on which to rely when judging what constitutes significant harm. A single, serious event of abuse, such as an incident of sexual abuse or violent assault, might be the cause of significant harm to a child. However, more frequently significant harm occurs as a result of a long-standing compilation of events, which interrupt, change or damage a child's physical and psychological development.

The significant harm resulting from the corrosive effect of long-term abuse is likely to have a profound impact on the future outcomes for the child. At the time of referral it might not be clear whether a child is in need or is suffering significant harm. The initial assessment should ensure that sufficient information is obtained by social services to make a judgement about the nature of the need and/or harm and what action is required.

This requires the sharing of information between agencies, structured assessment and analysis, including taking into account the child's own view about his/her circumstances according to his/her age and understanding. A good assessment is an essential basis for deciding what the concerns are for the child; what needs to change; and which services and interventions are needed to achieve the planned changes.

To understand and establish significant harm, it is necessary to consider:

- The family context.
- The child's development within the context of their family and wider social and cultural environment.
- Any special needs, such as medical conditions, communication difficulties or disabilities that may affect the child's development and care within the family.
- The nature of harm, in terms of ill treatment or the failure to provide adequate care
- The impact on the child's health and development.
- The adequacy of parental care.

Reporting and Responding – Don't be a Bystander

This section of the policy sets out the necessary procedures and minimum standards to follow for Welsh Rugby Union employees or volunteers when allegations of abuse or poor practice are reported involving children.

The WRU assures all employees and volunteers that it will fully support and protect anyone who, in good faith (without malicious intent), reports their concern that a child may be subject of abuse.

The WRU are committed to ensuring that in any safeguarding disciplinary investigations involving children, that the welfare of the child remains paramount, and that there is a child centred approach.

Everyone has a legal and moral responsibility to respond to any concerns, irrespective of whether the cause of the concern is internal or external, and to ensure that they take action by reporting this in line with the WRU's procedures.

Even if the incident has occurred outside a sporting environment, the WRU Safeguarding Team must be notified. If the allegation relates to a rugby volunteer who is subject to an investigation, this may indicate a risk to children within the sport.

In some cases, sharing a concern will not trigger an investigation, but may help to build up a picture, along with information from other sources, which suggests that a person may be suffering abuse or harm.

There may be an occasion when a child approaches an individual (CSO, Coach, Volunteer etc.) and indicates that they are being abused. In such instances, it is vital that appropriate and immediate action is taken.

It is acknowledged that feelings generated by the discovery that a member of staff or volunteer is, or may be, abusing a child, will raise concerns among other staff or volunteers. This includes the difficulties inherent in reporting such matters. If any person has knowledge, concerns or suspicions that a person is suffering, has suffered or is likely to be at risk of harm, it is their

responsibility to ensure that the concerns are referred to Social Services or the Police, who have the statutory duties and powers to make enquiries and intervene when necessary.

People who are being abused will only tell people about this, that they trust, or who they feel safe with. Coaches can very often be in this position of trust, and have a close relationship with a child or adult that they coach. They may see the coach or other volunteer as a person who they can trust and confide in. It is important that all volunteers and coaches in particular have an understanding of what to do if this happens.

It is recommended that all volunteers or staff who are in a position of trust attend Safeguarding Training with the WRU. If you require such training please contact the WRU Policy and Integrity Team.

Regardless of how concerns may have arisen, the person who received the disclosure or witnessed an incident must ensure the information is reported.

They must not allow personal opinions regarding the credibility of any individual, or the information they have received, to prevent them from making the referral. They should not worry that they may be mistaken, as the responsibility to make the assessment of the concern rests with the statutory agencies.

It is extremely important that people are not bystanders when it comes to reporting concerns. The 'bystander' effect has been a prominent issue in some cases of non-recent abuse reported within the sport sector. It is clear that in some of these cases there was a level of suspicion about behaviours which constituted a potential risk to children.

The role of the 'bystander' plays an important part in the prevention of sexual abuse and in reducing risk. The role is not confined to reporting concerns after abuse may have occurred, but more importantly intervening to challenge thinking and behaviour in order to prevent abuse occurring.

This can happen where people operate in an environment, where they are equipped and supported to intervene, and be proactive agents to prevent abuse occurring.

How Abuse may be Reported - Children

Abuse concerns can arise in many different situations and contexts. It is not the role of anyone within the sport to investigate possible concerns of abuse but it is essential that all staff and volunteers clearly understand the action that must be taken in the event of:

- A direct disclosure of abuse from a child or young person.
- A direct disclosure of abuse from an adult at risk or person involved in their care.
- A disclosure from an adult of abuse that occurred during their childhood (historical abuse).
- Observed abuse, neglect or poor practice.
- Observed concerning changes in behaviour, appearance or relationships, or other possible indicators of abuse.
- A report from a third party (e.g. another young person or adult within the club) or via an external organisation.

Child Protection concerns may arise from:

- Behaviour or experiences within the sports organisation or environment (e.g. allegations of abuse by a coach).
- Allegations arising outside the organisation (e.g. allegations of abuse at home, school or care setting).

The following procedures outline the steps that should be taken and provides guidance on sharing relevant information with Social Services and/or Police and other relevant organisations without delay and within agreed protocols.

Who to Report to?

In the event that abuse or harm is suspected, the following action should be taken:

- Report your concern immediately to the Club Safeguarding Officer.
- Report the concern immediately to the WRU Safeguarding Team.
- The CSO or the WRU Safeguarding Manager must refer the matter without delay to Social Services and/or the Police. If the CSO takes this step they must also inform the WRU
- If a child or adult is in immediate risk and action needs to be taken urgently, a 999 call must be made to the Police.

Who else Needs to Know?

The parent or guardian will be informed at the earliest opportunity, unless this is inconsistent with the need to ensure the victim's safety, but advice should be sought from Social Services as to what information should be provided to parents, by whom and when

In the event that there is any uncertainty as to whether a referral is appropriate, the NSPCC 24-hour helpline or Social Services will be able to offer advice on what action to take

In the case of non-recent abuse, disclosures must still be reported to Social Services and Police, as above, as the perpetrator may continue to present a risk to other children or adults at risk.

It is important that any information that has been disclosed remains confidential and should only be discussed with people who need to know.

Responding and Recording Information – The Six R's

Volunteers or Staff who have to deal with disclosures of abuse should consider the 'Six R's as a guide of what to do:

- RECOGNISE signs or indicators of abuse.
- REASSURE the child or adult involved.
- RECORD what is said, but don't ask questions unless you need to clarify something, and then use 5WH and an open questioning style (Who, What, Where, When, Why and How).
- REPORT or REFER to the appropriate person i.e. Police, Social Services or if appropriate the WRU Safeguarding Team.
- RETAIN any notes or materials that you have gathered.
- REMEMBER TO DO THE RIGHT THING.



If a child discloses that they or another child is being abused, the person receiving the information should:

- Identify if someone is injured or, and if so take immediate action by seeking help i.e. contacting the Police or Ambulance.
- Stay calm and ensure that the child feels safe, particularly if there is an immediate risk presented.
- Show the child that you have heard what they are saying, and that you take their allegations seriously.
- Reassure them that they've done nothing wrong.
- Allow the person to talk freely, and use their own words, but do not probe for more information than is offered as this may affect any subsequent investigation by Police and/or Social Services.

- Don't interrupt when they are recalling significant events.
- Active Listening is key. Don't make them repeat their account of what happened, unless you need to clarify something.
- Recognise any difficulties they may have in explaining the incidents.
- Reassure the person that they have done the right thing in talking about this, and disclosing the information.
- Explain what actions you must take, in a way that is appropriate to the age and understanding of the person.
- Do not promise to keep what you have been told secret or confidential, as you have a responsibility to disclose information to those who need to know. Reporting concerns is not a betrayal of trust.
- Collect relevant facts and appropriate information.
- Make a written record of the concern including what was said using the person's own words, and do this as soon as possible.
- Maintain confidentiality if appropriate and only tell those people that need to know i.e. CSO
- If the person indicates that they do not wish others to be informed about the allegations, it is important to sensitively explain why you need to share the information, it is important to be honest in your approach.

Recording Information

Concerns about child abuse can arise in many different contexts, including when a person is already known to Social Services. Concerns can and should be shared with them through a referral. While concerns will not necessarily trigger an investigation, they help to build up a picture, along with concerns from other sources, which suggests that a child may be suffering harm.

Accurate, concise and clear record keeping in straightforward language is an essential part of an individual employee and professional's accountability towards people using their services, and underpins good child and adult protection.

Many local authorities have developed protocols establishing arrangements for conducting initial assessments by local services and defining the circumstances and thresholds under which a child should be referred to social services.

Referrals should be made to Social Services as soon as a problem, suspicion or concern about a child or adult becomes apparent, and certainly within 24 hours.

Outside office hours, referrals should be made to the Social Services emergency duty team or the Police. Social Services and the Police must ensure that an appropriate level and deployment of trained staff are available to undertake child protection section 47 enquiries, including out of hours.

The report can be made via e-mail to the WRU Policy and Integrity Team via the Integrity Mailbox integrity@wru.wales and should be marked as confidential. The referral should contain personal information and an incident report including the following information :

Personal Information – Victim

Name of the Club	Date of birth or age of the person
Time and Date of Incident	Address and Contact details
Name of the Child	Ethnicity
Name of the Parent, Guardian, Carer and contact details	Any additional needs of the person

Person Subject of Concern (PSC)

Name of the Person	Address and Contact details
Date of birth or age of the person	Ethnicity
Role	

Incident Report

Brief details of what occurred/ allegation made and any background knowledge	Any background knowledge that you may have regarding the child or adult at risk (additional needs etc.)
Description of any visible injuries	Actions taken to date and any external agencies informed
Any observed changes in the child or Adults behaviour	Name of Person reporting/ referring

Contact details

The contact details of the Social Services Duty Officer or Police Officer to whom the concerns are referred, together with the time and date of the call, and any agreed action to be taken, should be recorded. The WRU Safeguarding Team should be notified of the referral and the above information as soon as possible.

There is a likelihood that this may generate a multi-agency investigation, and the WRU Safeguarding Manager will take the lead for the organisation and may contribute in the following ways:

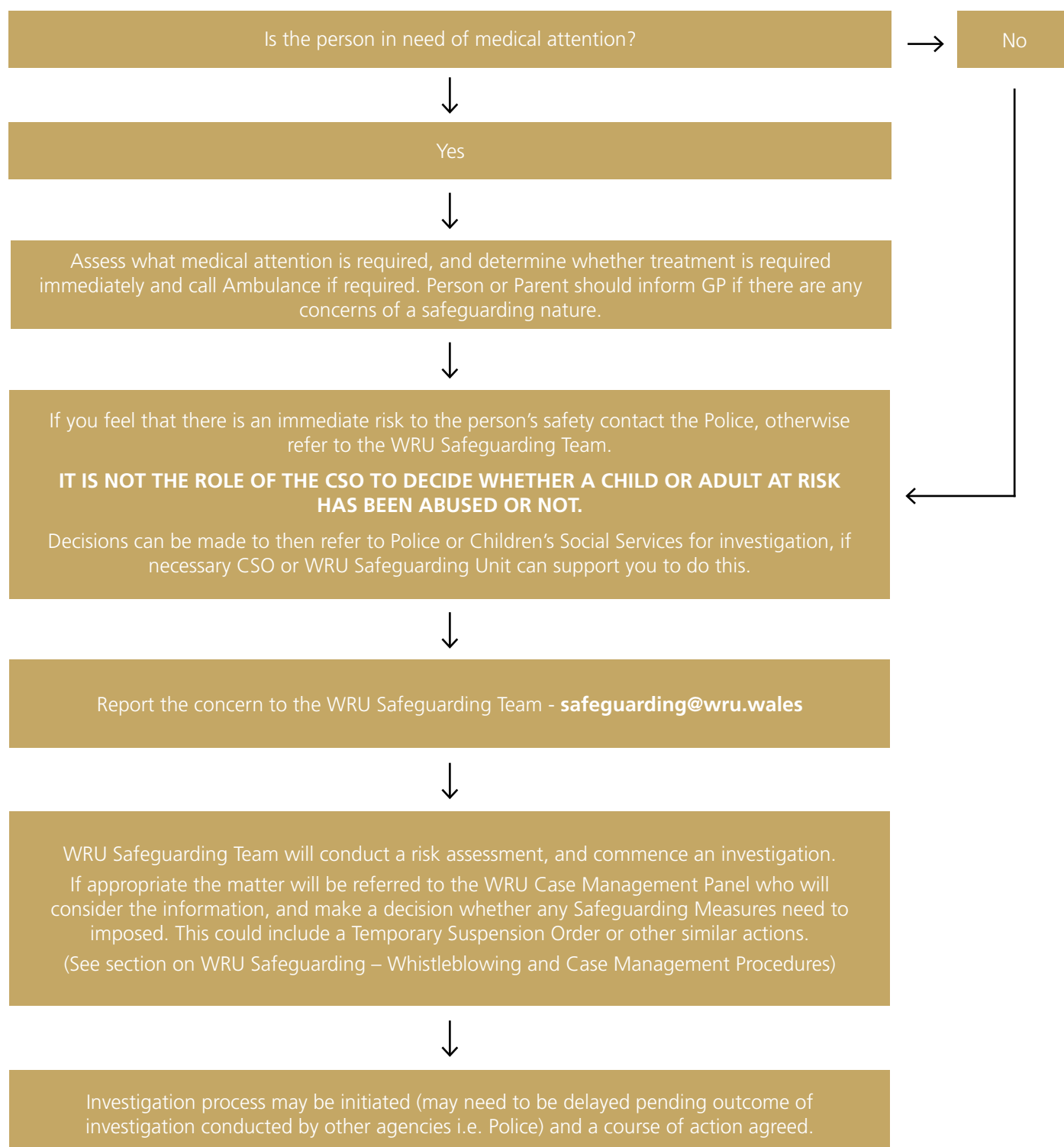
- Attend Strategy Meeting or Telephone Strategy Discussion
- Assist in the Child Protection Section 47 enquiries (multi-agency investigation)

CSOs or other volunteers who may have referred this matter will not be expected to attend the strategy meeting or contribute to these discussions unless it is specifically requested from other professionals.

There are a list of safeguarding contact numbers and email addresses included on page 106.

RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE (within or outside a rugby environment)

Follow the Six R's. Recognise what the issues are and ensure that the Child or Adult at Risk is Reassured. If there is a risk of further immediate abuse, take action and if urgent contact the Police. Record what is said or a summary of this and ensure that you Retain any written records. Do not make promises of confidentiality.



The Role of Statutory Agencies - Child Protection

If there is a concern referred to Social Services, regarding a child protection matter, the information will be reviewed and action considered. Social Services will discuss the case and may have a telephone strategy discussion with Police before making a decision as to how the matter is investigated and conduct an initial assessment.

A strategy discussion should take place as a minimum between appropriate personnel with responsibility for child protection in Police and Social Services and the referring agency. The discussion should include other relevant professionals such as Health, Education and a member of the WRU Safeguarding Team.

The purpose of the strategy discussion is to share and discuss in detail all information gathered to date, as well as the nature of the concern.

The staff involved in the discussion should be sufficiently senior to make decisions on behalf of their agency. The discussion can take place either in person or over the telephone, and may take place at any stage following referral.

The strategy discussion should agree the course of action required and timescales set for those actions to be carried out. It should agree what information about the strategy discussion is shared with the family. Professionals should keep families fully informed unless such information sharing may place the child at risk of significant harm and/or jeopardise Police investigations into any alleged offence(s).

The strategy discussion must consider any wider safeguarding needs.

The strategy discussion may result in the decision to take one or more of the following course(s) of action:

- No further action - if it transpires that the allegation is without substance and there are no other concerns
- Referral to support services if preliminary enquiries have revealed significant unmet needs for support and services but no issues in relation to significant harm
- Child protection enquiries
- Emergency action to safeguard the child if he or she is considered to be at imminent risk of significant harm

The multi-agency investigation will be conducted and when completed there will be an Outcome Professional Strategy Meeting held to decide, whether on the balance of probabilities the concerns are substantiated. If the concerns are not deemed to be substantiated, then the outcome should be recorded as unsubstantiated, unfounded or deliberately invented or malicious.

The following definitions will guide strategy meetings in determining which outcome applies; Allegations will have outcomes within the following four categories:

- **Substantiated** – a substantiated allegation is one which is established by evidence or proof.
- **Unsubstantiated** – an unsubstantiated allegation is not the same as an allegation that is later proved to be false. It simply means that there is insufficient identifiable evidence to prove or disprove the allegation. The term, therefore, does not imply guilt or innocence.
- **Unfounded** – this indicates that the person making the allegation misinterpreted the incident or was mistaken about what they saw. Alternatively they may not have been aware of all the circumstances. For an allegation to be classified as unfounded, it will be necessary to have evidence to disprove the allegation.
- **Deliberately invented or malicious** – this means there is clear evidence to prove there has been a deliberate act to deceive and the allegation is entirely false.

The outcomes discussion would normally precede any decision by the employer to invoke disciplinary procedures. Where the concerns are substantiated, employing or volunteer agencies should consult if not already done so with the Disclosure and Barring Service and other relevant professional bodies about the requirement for a referral.

Confidentiality and Information Sharing

Decisions on who needs to be informed should be taken by the WRU after discussion with statutory agencies. Remember that the Data Protection Act is not a barrier to sharing information. If you require advice on this please contact the WRU Safeguarding Team.

Sharing information is a critical element of safeguarding, and consent should normally be sought from the subject(s) of the information in order for it to be shared. However in the interests of child protection, it may be necessary for information to be shared with relevant staff and volunteers within the WRU, Social Services, Police and other sports organisations without consent if there is reason to believe that seeking consent could place a child at risk in a position of significant harm.

The WRU will only share confidential information without consent where there is a reasonable belief that failure to disclose would place the child or adult at risk at increased risk of significant harm and/or would undermine the prevention, detection or prosecution of a serious crime.

Sharing Concerns with Parents

Commitment to working with parents and guardians is important when having concerns about a person's well-being. Therefore, in most situations, it would be important to talk to parents or guardians to help clarify any initial concerns. For example, if a child seems withdrawn, there may be a reasonable explanation. He/she may have experienced an upset in the family such as parental separation or divorce or bereavement.

There are circumstances in which a child might be placed at even greater risk if such concerns were shared (e.g. where a parent or guardian may be responsible for the abuse or not able to respond to the situation appropriately). In these situations or where concerns still exist, any suspicion, allegation or incident of abuse must be reported to the CSO as soon as possible and recorded. Parents or Guardians should not be contacted if the concern is about sexual abuse. This will be done by Social Services and/or the Police at the appropriate time.



DON'T BE A BYSTANDER

If you have any concerns please contact
the WRU Safeguarding Team

Integrity Line
02920 822 200

Safeguarding Mailbox E-mail
safeguarding@wru.wales

DON'T TACKLE IT ALONE

