

RESPONDING TO A CONCERN ABOUT A CHILD

All wellbeing concerns and disclosures of abuse must be taken seriously and responded to immediately. Whilst the police and social work have the responsibility for investigating abuse, it is everyone's responsibility to report it.

In this section you will find advice on how to respond to and report a wellbeing concern or a disclosure of abuse.

Club volunteers and staff may be informed in different ways regarding a concern about a child.

This may be:

- A direct disclosure by a child,
- Through observation of a child, demonstrated by a change in their behaviour, appearance or demeanour, and;
- Information that is shared from another individual or organisation.

Adults who regularly works with children in an athletics setting may be the person that a child chooses to tell about issues that are concerning them. It is vital that you know how to handle these situations sensitively and appropriately, and how to share information with those who can help.

It is recommended that as a minimum everyone working in regulated positions in each club must:

- Know the name and contact details of the Club Welfare Officer (CWO)
- Have signed the codes of conduct for their role when working with children
- Know what constitutes good practice for their role
- Know the process for responding to concerns
- Be aware of other relevant policies
- Attend Safeguarding & Protecting Children in Sport, training (or another basic child protection awareness workshop) within 1 year of commencing work with children and young athletes.
- Be a current member of the PVG scheme

Wellbeing concerns about a child or young person:

It is important to know what wellbeing concerns are and what signs to look for.

Information on wellbeing concerns is available in the section on; [GIRFEC and Wellbeing](#).

Where the concern does not involve the possibility of abuse, the concerns or observations may be discussed with parents/carers. For example, if a child seems withdrawn, he/she may have experienced an upset in the family, such as a parental separation, divorce or bereavement. Common sense is advised in these situations.

Any significant, untoward or unusual incidents which cause concern about the welfare of a child should be recorded on the [Concern Report Form](#) and reported to the club welfare officer as soon as possible. Parents/carers should also be informed of the circumstances as soon as possible.

Advice should be sought from Scottish Athletics welfare officer if there is any uncertainty about the appropriate course of action where there are concerns about the general welfare of a child.

Handling cases of suspected child abuse:

There are four steps to the process for handling cases of suspected child abuse:

- **Recognising**
- **Responding**
- **Reporting**
- **Recording**

Recognising:

It is important to know what child abuse is and what signs to look for.

Detailed guidance and advice on recognising abuse is available in the section on; [Child Abuse, Definitions, Signs and Indicators.](#)

Responding

Allegations of abuse must always be taken seriously and acted upon.

If a child tells you about a concern, or that they or another child is being, or has been abused, or you witness or become concerned about a child's behaviour, you should keep in mind the following advice:

- React calmly and in a manner that does not alarm the child.
- Listen to what they say and don't show surprise or shock.
- Reassure them they are not to blame and were right to tell you.
- Allow them the space and time to talk.
- Avoid asking too many questions, just gather basic information, (who, where, when, what).
- Don't give personal viewpoints or opinion.
- Don't dismiss or ridicule the disclosure.
- Don't promise to keep it a secret, be clear that this is important, and you will have to tell someone who can help.
- Don't make negative comments about the alleged abuser.
- Don't approach an alleged abuser to discuss the concern.
- Don't discuss the allegations with anyone who does not need to know.
- Don't delay in reporting the concerns to the club welfare officer, or in an emergency to the Police.
- Don't ignore what has been disclosed – you have a duty to act.

Recording:

All wellbeing concerns and disclosures of abuse must be recorded in writing using the [Concern Report Form](#), which can be found in the Welfare section of the Scottish Athletics website.

If you do not have a form available try to be accurate and factual, and as soon as you can, write down:

- The child's name and date of birth.
- How the disclosure was made (in person, 2nd hand by someone else, observation)
- Where the disclosure took place (date/time/location).
- Whether the child told you about a personal concern or about someone else.
- Use the child's own words – don't try to edit or make it sound polite or less concerning.
- What the concern is.

- Description of any visible injuries, behaviours – do not examine the child.
- Details of any witnesses.
- What the child's view is – bear in mind the abuse may be something the child is not conscious of – it could be normal to them.

Reporting:

If you receive a disclosure of abuse or have a concern about a child, it is not your responsibility to investigate, or decide if it happened or not. You should act to protect the child and report the circumstances as soon as possible to the appropriate agency, such as the police and social services.

- You must inform your club welfare officer and submit the Concern Report Form to them as soon as possible.
- The club welfare officer must inform the Scottish Athletics welfare officer of all reported wellbeing concerns and disclosures of abuse.
- If the concern relates to the club welfare officer, a senior person at the club should be informed and the matter referred to the Police and/or social services, as well as the Scottish Athletics welfare officer.
- All information and documentation should be treated as confidential and only shared with those who need to know.

Remember:

If the child is in immediate danger call Police Scotland on 999.

Sharing concerns with Parents/Carers:

Where there are concerns that the parents/carers may be responsible for or have knowledge of the abuse, sharing information with them may place the child at further risk. In such cases advice must always firstly be sought from the police or social work services as to who informs the parents/carers.