Appendix C: Dealing with concerns/allegations about the welfare of a young person

Dealing with concerns and allegations about the welfare of a young person
It is the responsibility of the child protection experts to determine whether or not abuse has taken place, but it is everyone’s responsibility to report any concerns. The reporting of such concerns should never be delayed and allegations made by children or young people must never be dismissed.

The supporting flow diagram provides a clear illustration of the steps to be followed if you have a concern about poor practice or abuse. Where necessary, you should always ensure the immediate safety of the child involved (and other children) before clarifying concerns.

Concerns about poor practice and possible abuse within a sport setting
Recent enquiries indicate that abuse that occurs within a public setting is rarely a one-off event. It is crucial that those involved in sport are aware of this possibility and that all allegations are treated seriously and appropriate actions taken. Allegations may also relate to poor practice where an adult or peer’s behaviour is inappropriate and may be causing concern to a young person.

If a young person says or indicates that he or she is being abused (by an adult or another child) or information is obtained which gives concern that a young person is being abused, immediate action should always be taken. As part of your role within Active Sussex, it is your responsibility to act upon any concerns that you may have, reporting such matters should never be delayed. It is, however, important to note that it is not your responsibility to determine whether or not abuse has or is taking place.

Types and indicators of abuse
It is important that people working with children are aware of the indicators of abuse and have the confidence to respond to any indication that a child may have been abused. Some indicators of child abuse are:

- bruising, particularly in the face, head or neck region
- multiple bruising or injuries - for example, burns, scalds, sprains, dislocations or fractures
- injury left untreated
- differing versions of how an injury occurred
- child/relative advising of abuse
- a child, referring to someone else being abused, may mean him/herself
- sexual behaviour that is inappropriate for the age of the child
- nightmares/bedwetting going to bed fully-clothed
- a high level of distrust of other people
- an inability to relate well with adults and/or children
- extreme attention-seeking behaviour, disruptive or aggressive behaviour and bullying
- seeking indiscriminate or inappropriate adult affection.
The presence of one indicator does not necessarily suggest that a child is the subject of abuse. People working with children need to consider the context in which the indicators are observed and use common sense. If you feel any doubt, contact your state or territory’s child protection agency.

**How to respond to a safeguarding concern**

**If a child or young person is in immediate danger** contact Emergency services – dial 999 or 101 and ask for the Child Protection Team.

**If you have serious concerns for the welfare or safety a child or young person but they aren’t in immediate danger** this should be reported directly to Children’s Services via the [Pan Sussex Child Protection and Safeguarding Procedures website](#) (details Appendix B).

Concerns should be reported immediately, or at the earliest opportunity, to one of the designated Active Sussex Safeguarding Officers, who will take such steps as considered necessary to ensure the safety of the child in question and any other child who may be at risk.

- The designated person will refer the allegation to Children’s Services (out-of-hours services are available) who may involve the Police, or go directly to the Police;
- The parents or carers of the child will be contacted as soon as possible following advice from the Children’s Services department;
- Active Sussex’s will follow their internal media protocols document to deal with any media enquiries;
- It is essential to ensure the safety of the young person (if present) – if the young person needs immediate medical treatment, call a doctor or an ambulance, inform doctors of concerns or suspicions of abuse to ensure that they are aware that it is a child protection issue;
- Make a full record of what has been said, heard or seen as soon as possible (Appendix E);
- Continue to follow the step-by-step process shown diagrammatically in Appendix D

While all staff and volunteers working for Active Sussex will have received training on issues of child protection, they are not experts, and it is not their responsibility to determine whether or not abuse has taken place. If there is any doubt about whether or not the alleged behaviour constitutes abuse, the concern must be shared with professional agencies that will be responsible for subsequent action.

**Records and confidentiality**

*Confidentiality should be maintained at all times.*

Information should be handled and disseminated on a need to know basis only. This includes the following people:

- The designated person in charge;
- The parents of the person who is alleged to have been abused;
- The person making the allegation;
- Social services and police;
- Designated officers within the governing body of sport e.g. Legal Adviser, Lead Child Protection Officer;
- The alleged abuser;
- Parents of the abuser, (if the alleged abuser is a child) - Seek Children’s Services advice on who should approach the alleged abuser.
**Appendix D: Reporting process**

**Report the concern**
If a child or young person is in immediate danger or you have serious concerns about their welfare or safety then this should be reported directly to Children’s Services or the Emergency services.

- **If you are affiliated to a national governing body** you can also refer to their safeguarding procedures about who to report the concerns to.
- **If your club or activity isn’t affiliated to a governing body** contact Active Sussex or your local Children’s Social Care (Social Services).
- **If no one else is available to help and you are concerned for the child welfare**, then contact the police.

**Procedures for responding to disclosure, allegations and suspicions**

- Through your own or third party observation, you become suspicious of harm or possible harm to a child/young person:
  - Make full record of details and actions taken (Appendix E) and notify nominated person ASAP.

- Physical or behavioural indication that a child is being harmed:
  - Record observations (Appendix E) and notify nominated person ASAP.

- A child/young person informs you directly of their concerns or is harmed in some way:
  - Stay calm. Reassure young person and thank them for telling you. Don’t make promises of confidentiality or outcome. Keep questions to minimum.

- Is the designated person in charge of Child Protection/Safeguarding available?
  - **Yes**: Inform designated person of your concerns or suspicions, what action has been taken and provide completed report form (Appendix E).
  - **No**: Nominated person makes decision to inform NGB and/or, Children’s services / Sussex Police (Appendix B).

- Is the young person in need of immediate medical treatment?
  - **Yes**: Call a doctor or ambulance.
  - **No**: Make full record (Appendix E) and notify nominated person ASAP.

- Seek urgent advice from NSPCC (0808 800 5000), Child Protection in Sport Unit (01163 665 580), Social Services (contact details Appendix B) or the Police if child informs you directly of abuse.

- Take any action advised by these agencies. Inform the lead safeguarding person of your concerns/ suspicions and what action has been taken and provide completed report form (Appendix E).

- Leave appropriate organisation to take the matter forward.

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